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Crime as a "Normal" Phenomenon: Revisiting Durkheim in the Context of Crime Concentrations

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ABSTRACT

In a radical reimagining of crime in the 19th century, Émile Durkheim described crime as a "normal" phenomenon which was functional and essential to the workings of healthy societies. Durkheim noted that crime performs specific functions: it reinforces collective norms, clarifies the boundaries of acceptable behavior, and fosters social cohesion in response to violations. In his view, a healthy social order would lead to relatively normal or consistent rates of crime. While Durkheim's proposition regarding a normal level of crime in society does not seem to fit recent experience and is seldom discussed by sociologists or criminologists today, our review suggests that there is indeed a "normal level of crime" in cities, but one that relates to the concentration of crime at place and not to the overall rate of crime. We think in this context that a different proposition from Durkheim's can be raised at this juncture and should be examined in future studies. Weisburd (2015) has argued that there is a law of crime concentration at place reflecting strong concentrations of crime within a narrow bandwidth. Despite changes in crime rates, the concentration of crime appears to follow a consistent pattern across time, and across cities. This is an intriguing finding that places Durkheim's theorizing in a new light. In our discussion and conclusions, we consider why crime concentrations appear to vary within a narrow range drawing from Durkheim's discussion in the *Rules of the Sociological Method*, and consider policy implications of this perspective.

1 | Introduction

At the turn of the 19th century, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim suggested a radical idea about the crime problem. Common among the general public, as well as sociologists at the time, was the idea that crime was a social problem, a sickness that had to be cured. Crime was not an integral part of social life, but rather an indication of pathology. Durkheim, in the *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895/1982), noted as much in introducing his discussion of crime. He wrote: "If there is a fact whose pathological nature appears indisputable, it is crime. All criminologists agree on this score. Although they explain this pathology differently, they none the less unanimously acknowledge it." (pg. 60). Importantly, these assumptions about crime were not just common more than a century ago, they are part of modern understandings of the crime problem. There have been, for example, in the United States over the last 60 years, several government efforts to fight "wars" against crime (Calder 1982; Chernoff et al. 1996; Marion and Farmer 2004). The implication of this language is clearly that crime could be defeated—that crime is not a natural and normal part of the social order.

But Durkheim went on to propose something quite the opposite. He noted that crime is a part of every society, "although it changes in form and the actions which are termed criminal" (1895/1982; pg. 60). He then explains why crime forms such an important part of his understanding of sociological phenomenon, and why it

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provides an important example of how a lay view of society can miss the underlying social importance of a phenomenon. Indeed, he argues that crime is a "normal" part of society, and not simply that, but that it is functional to the workings of the social order.[1] Durkheim noted that crime performs specific functions: it reinforces collective norms, clarifies the boundaries of acceptable behavior, and fosters social cohesion in response to violations:

> Thus there is no phenomenon which represents more incontrovertibly all the symptoms of normality, since it appears to be closely bound up with the conditions of all collective life. ... It can certainly happen that crime itself has abnormal forms; this is what happens, for instance, when it reaches an excessively high level. There is no doubt that this excessiveness is pathological in nature. What is normal is simply that criminality exists, provided that for each social type it does not reach or go beyond a certain level which it is perhaps not impossible to fix in conformity with the previous rules... We are faced with a conclusion which is apparently somewhat paradoxical. Let us make no mistake: to classify crime among the phenomena of normal sociology is not merely to declare that it is an inevitable though regrettable phenomenon arising from the incorrigible wickedness of men; it is to assert that it is a factor in public health, an integrative element in any healthy society.
>
> (Durkheim, 1895/1982: 61)

Durkheim's straightforward statement about crime as a normal phenomenon integral to a healthy society, has intrigued sociologists and criminologists over the last century (e.g., see Blumstein and Cohen 1973; Cohen and Machalek 1994; Krohn 1978; Leavitt 1992; Turkel 1979). It has for example, been critical in the development of the sociology of deviance (e.g., see Akers 1968; Clinard and Meier 1963; Downes 1999; Franzese 2015), and in labeling theories (e.g., see Fine 1977; Rotenberg 1974). Durkheim suggested that by defining and punishing criminals society expresses its norms and defines the boundaries of normative behavior. Becker (1974), for example, used Durkheim's proposition to reinforce the idea that deviance was a product of social definition and that labeling people as deviant had a functional role in helping to define what is normal in society. Of course, in taking this position Becker and other early deviance theorists (e.g., see Erikson 1966; Kitsuse 1961) did not see the stigmas of labeling as a positive societal outcome, but rather sought to show how deviance was not inherent to specific behaviors but was a product of social definition. Erikson (1966), for example, in his seminal study of Puritan communities in New England, observed how punishment played a key role in reinforcing and defining norms in early American communities.

In this article we focus on the proposition that healthy societies might have consistent or normal levels of crime. Originally, this idea had been interpreted by scholars as pertaining to rates of crime or punishment being stable and we show below that this idea has not been borne out by empirical study. Below we argue that Durkheim's insight about the "normality" of crime is more accurately observed in the spatial concentration of crime at micro geographies than the rates of crime in cities or societies. Weisburd (2015) has termed this phenomenon the "law of crime concentration at places," and proposed that the concentration of crime in cities, for example the proportion of streets that produce 25 or 50% of crime will vary within a narrow bandwidth. This underlying regularity appears to follow closely the principle of a "normality" of crime that Durkheim proposed, though we recognize that it focuses on a very different way of describing the crime problem.

We begin our paper by illustrating that crime and punishment rates do not appear to follow Durkheim's discussion of normal crime. Crime and punishment rates vary widely within and across communities and societies. We then turn to the concentration of crime at place and show that research in this area appears to support an idea of normal crime, with crime concentrations operating within a narrow bandwidth across and within cities. In our discussion and conclusions, we consider the ways in which crime concentrations can play a role in defining moral boundaries and increasing solidarity in modern cities drawing from Durkheim's discussion in the *Rules of the Sociological Method*.

1.1 | There Does Not Appear to Be Evidence of Normal Rates of Crime in Society

It is important to recognize that Durkheim did not propose that there would always be the same number of specific crimes in every society. Indeed, his thesis was not so much about the reality of crime as about how society defines crime. Durkheim's normality of crime proposition focused on the normality of a rate of crime definition. This idea is put forward clearly and succinctly in Durkheim's discussion of a community of saints:

> Imagine a community of saints in an exemplary and perfect monastery. In it crime as such will be unknown, but faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences. If therefore that community has the power to judge and punish, it will term such acts criminal and deal with them as such.
>
> (Durkheim, 1895/1982: 62)

The "community of saints" example illustrates Durkheim's argument that definitions of crime shift, yet the overall presence or level of crime persists. The normality of crime in this context was about the need for healthy societies to have a certain overall level of crime as defined by agents of authority. In this context, one might expect that when a society has lower levels of specific crimes such as aggression or violence, it will define other behaviors as crimes as substitutes to reach the equilibrium level of normal crime. This means that in evaluating Durkheim's proposition we need to look at crime as a general type, and not very specific types of infractions.

Durkheim's proposition of a normal level of crime within narrow bandwidths in healthy societies has not been borne out in

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regard to crime rates in societies. There is evidence across the world that crime rates will vary considerably over time (Aebi et al. 2002; Eisner 2003; Farrell et al. 2014; Kesteren et al. 2014). In the US, for example, the period of the 1990s early 2000s has often been defined as the period of the "great crime decline" (Blumstein and Wallman 2000; Rosenfeld 2004; Sharkey 2018; Zimring 2006). Figure 1 shows the combined US violence and property crime rate per 100,000 in the United States from 1985 to 2024.[2] What is apparent from the figure is that crime rates vary greatly over time.

Crime statistics in Europe tell a similar story. Between 1960 and 2010, for example, there was a dramatic rise in general crime statistics. Figure 2 shows overall crime rates for 7 European countries, and in each, crime rates rise two to three times during that period, though in the 1990s the beginning of a crime decline is visible in 4 of the 7 countries examined in Figure 2—Italy, France, and the Netherlands remained stable from the 1990s until 2010. More generally, similar to the United States, scholars in Europe have also identified a large decline in crime since the 1990s. The European crime drop has been observed consistently in both victimization surveys and police data, though with some variation in timing, magnitude, and crime type (Farrell et al. 2014; Tseloni et al. 2010; van Dijk and Tseloni 2012; van Dijk et al. 2012).

Blumstein and Cohen (1973) drew on Durkheim's thesis to examine the "stability of punishment." Their early research on incarceration patterns in the United States showed that although crime rates fluctuate, levels of punishment tend to remain relatively stable. This follows a similar argument made by Erikson (1966) who noted that punishment rates remained relatively stable in Plymouth Colony in the 17th Century (for an opposing view see Edwards and Fuhrman 1985). Drawing from data from 1930 to 1970 Blumstein and Cohen observed a remarkable level of stability in incarceration rates that appear to confirm Durkheim's original proposition. While some studies have supported Blumstein and Cohen's observations (e.g., Tremblay 1986), their findings were challenged using a variety of data sources by Rauma (1981). Blumstein (2006), updating the original article, showed that the period of stability he observed was upended by an explosion in punishment beginning in the late 1970s in the US that led to a five-fold increase over the rates that he observed in his earlier article.

From outside sociology and criminology, economists such as Narayan et al. (2010) and Cook and Cook (2011) have also investigated the idea of a minimum crime rate, analogous to the concept of natural unemployment. However, their findings were inconclusive. While they suggest that some baseline level of crime may exist, they do not support the notion that crime is a normal phenomenon or functionally necessary for society.

2 | The Normality of Crime Concentrations in Cities

Though the idea of a law of crime concentration at places was first raised by Weisburd et al. (2012), remarkable consistency in levels of concentration of crime were observed in two of the first studies in this area. In a study of "dispatched calls for police service" for 1 year in the mid-1980s, Sherman et al. (1989); see also Sherman (1987) reported that only 3.3% of the addresses in Minneapolis, MN, accounted for 50.4% of all crime calls to the police. In a study done at about the same time, Pierce

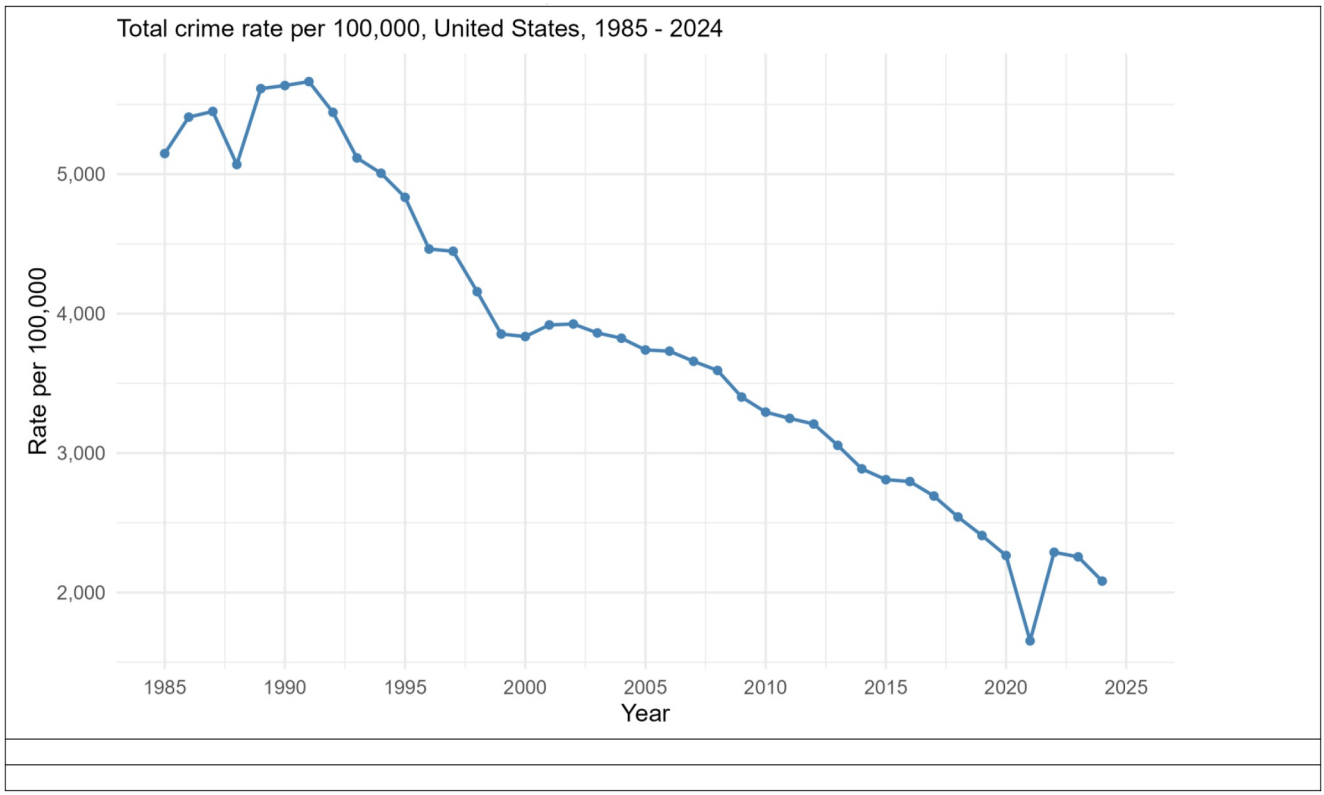


FIGURE 1 | US Violence and Property Crime rate per 100,000 from 1985 to 2024. *Source:* FBI Crime Data Explorer, https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/.

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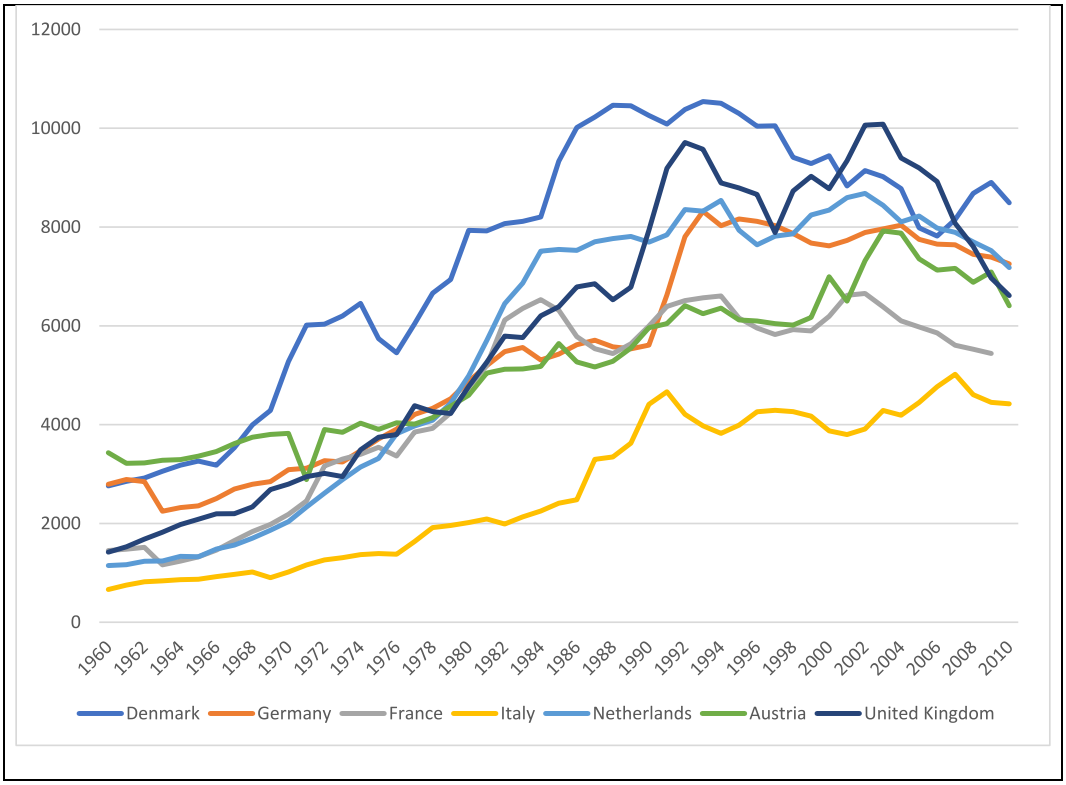


FIGURE 2 | Crime trends, 1960–2010, selected European countries. Crime data from https://ec.europa.eu/; Population data from https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/.

et al. (1988), found that in Boston, MA, between 1977 and 1982, 3.6% of addresses generated 50.1% of "total demands for police services." Many studies since the late 1980s have found that there is significant clustering of crime at micro-geographic units of analysis (e.g., see Andresen and Malleson 2011; Andresen et al. 2017a, 2017b; Bernasco and Steenbeek 2017; Braga et al., 2010a, 2010b, 2014; Brantingham and Brantingham 1999; Chalfin et al. 2021; Crow and Bull 1975; Curman et al. 2015; Groff et al. 2010; O'Brien 2019; O'Brien et al. 2022; Pierce et al. 1988; Roncek 2000; Sherman et al. 1989; Weisburd and Amram 2014; Weisburd et al. 2004; Weisburd and Green 1995; Weisburd et al. 2012; Weisburd et al. 1992; Weisburd et al. 2009).

In 2012, in a longitudinal study of street segments in Seattle, WA, Weisburd et al. (2012) observed not only that crime was concentrated, but across a 16-year observation period the level of concentration was remarkably consistent: 50% of crime incidents were found at between 4.7% and 6.1% of street segments in the city each year. This consistency was even more startling because while crime concentrations remained very stable, the city experienced a 24% decline in crime rates during this period. Weisburd et al. (2012) suggested that there was a "law of crime concentration" operating in Seattle, WA.

In 2015, Weisburd (2015) showed that this law of crime concentration applied across cities as well as within cities. He examined eight cities (including Seattle) and confirmed these earlier observations could be applied more broadly. Trying to define a way of describing the bounded nature of crime concentrations he argued that crime concentrations "will fall within a narrow bandwidth of percentages for a defined cumulative proportion of crime." While noting variability between the five larger and three smaller cities he examined, the overall range or bandwidth of crime concentrations observed in his study was between 2.1% and 6.0% of streets producing 50% of city crime, and between 0.4% and 1.6% producing 25% of city crime. In some of the cities, Weisburd was also able to examine crime trends over time. Figure 3 shows counts of crime incidents across four cities, including Seattle. Once again, the data suggest that crime varies widely across time within cities, while crime concentrations remain very stable. In each of the 4 cities 50% and 25% of crime are concentrated at very stable levels across the time periods studied (the solid lines). But contradictory to Durkheim's proposition crime incidents (the dotted lines) fluctuate widely.

A number of scholars have confirmed the general proposal of a law of crime concentration in cities (e.g., Andresen et al., 2017a, 2017b; Bernasco and Steenbeek 2017; Gill et al. 2017; Schnell and McManus 2022; Vandeviver and Steenbeek 2019; Weisburd and Zastrow 2022). In one analysis for example, Chalfin, Kaplan and Cuellar (2021:496) conclude that "(L)ike our predecessors, we find considerable evidence that crimes are concentrated among the cities we study and, accordingly, we provide additional support for the law of crime concentration." In turn, a recent review of crime concentration studies reinforces these observations about a tight bandwidth of crime concentrations across cities. Drawing from 49 estimates of crime concentrations at the 50% concentration level, Weisburd, Zastrow, et al. (2024) find a bandwidth of between 1.7 and 11% (see Figure 4). The median for the estimates was 4.5%, very close to Weisburd's original estimate of 4.7%. The bandwidth for 25% concentration is tighter, ranging between 0.4 and 3.4% (see Figure 5).

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FIGURE 3 | Crime counts and crime concentrations in four cities.

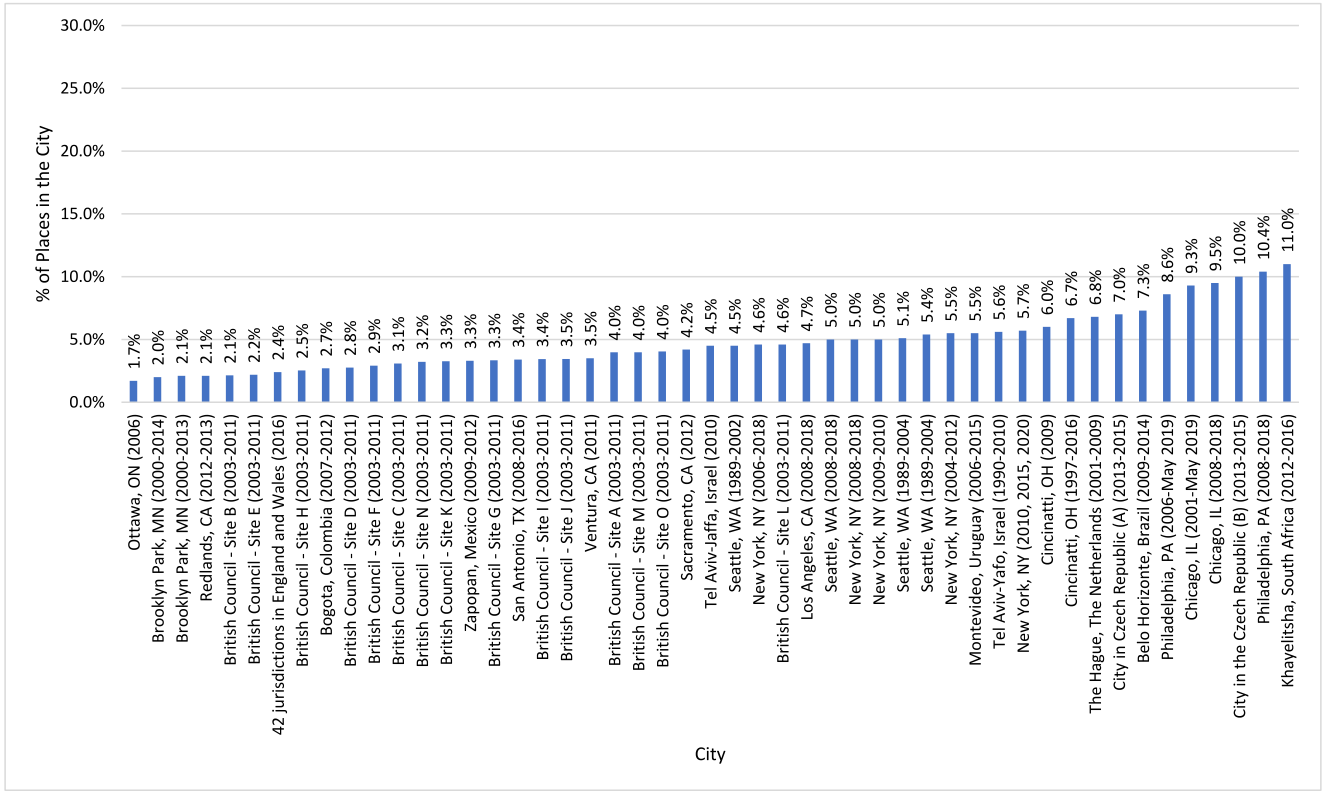


FIGURE 4 | Concentration of 50% of general crime incidents at street segments.

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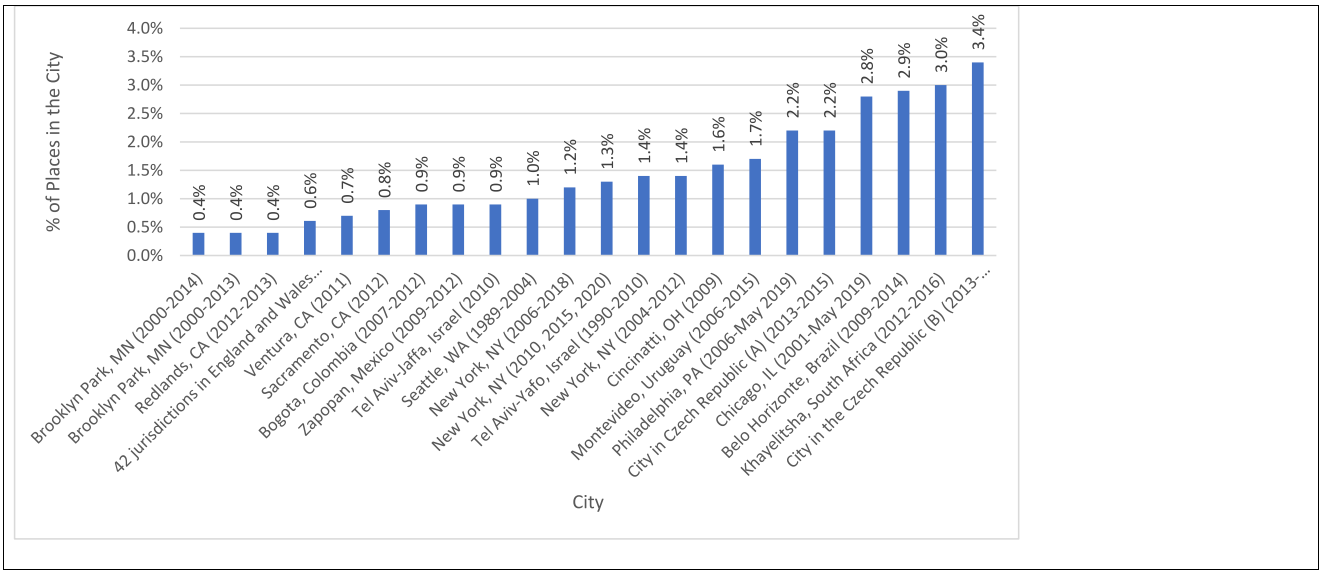


FIGURE 5 | Concentration of 25% of general crime incidents at street segments.

These data seem to follow closely Durkheim's proposition that there is a normal level of crime in cities, but they suggest that normal level is about the concentration of crime rather than rates of crime or punishment. Crime concentrations certainly fall within a narrow bandwidth with much of crime falling within a very small percentage of streets. A recent study shows as well that in larger cities about half of streets experience no crime incidents in a single year (Zastrow 2024). Crime in the city in this sense is tightly bounded in the way that Durkheim proposed, but that bounding is about where crime occurs rather than the rates of crime that are found in cities.

2.1 | Why is There a Normality of Crime Concentrations and What Implications Does This Have for Doing Something About the Crime Problem?

It is important to recognize that the concentration of crime follows patterns of concentration in many other areas of scientific inquiry (e.g., see Bak 1999; Eck et al. 2007; Hill et al. 2007; Koch 1999; Sherman 2007). Juran (1951) first noted this concentration in looking at economic activities, coining the phrase "the vital few and the trivial many." Juran sought to emphasize to managers that they should focus on the small number of events or cases that produce the majority of relevant business activities, for example the small number of defects that cause most complaints about products, or the small number of clients that are responsible for a majority of revenue. Juran termed this phenomenon the "Pareto Principle" after Pareto (1909), who first brought attention to what is sometimes referred to as the 80–20 rule (see also Koch 1999). Pareto observed that a number of distributions seem to follow this specific pattern of concentration. For example, in studying land ownership in Italy he found that 80% of the land was controlled by just 20% of the population. He also observed that 20% of the pea pods in his garden produced 80% of the peas. The 80–20 rule is generally seen only as an approximation, and indeed there are other concentration rules that have been noted—for example, the 90–10 rule as applied to computer processing (Lipovetsky 2009). Accordingly, it is not surprising that crime follows a general law of concentration. This is true for many other features of modern life. At the same time, the recognition of the normality in concentrations in other areas of social life does not mean that such regularity does not have a specific meaning in regard to crime. Indeed, concentration in industrial production, computer processing, or property ownership is likely to have different explanations than concentration of crime in cities.

We recognize as well that there are likely other mechanisms besides those we draw from Durkheim that may be generating a normality of crime concentrations. There is a long history in criminology for example, that suggests that social characteristics of communities' influence crime (Sampson 2012; Shaw and McKay 1942). The social disorganization perspective would point to the importance of concentrated disadvantage, racial composition, residential instability, and related social factors to understand crime concentrations in cities. Opportunity theories which are linked in particular to crime and place (Sherman et al. 1989), would suggest that consistency in land use and the concentration of public facilities such as parks or libraries, or transportations routes, might provide a partial explanation for the normality of crime concentrations (Brantingham and Brantingham 1995; Brantingham et al. 2017). Of course, city land use regulations may be developed intentionally or unintentionally to restrict crime to a certain proportion of places in the city as a reflection of political power or social inequalities. But again, this may simply be a part of the social fact of the normality of crime concentrations in cities. Our purpose in this paper was not to explore all of these possible explanations but to bring Durkheim's theory of the normality of crime into our discussion of crime concentrations.

Durkheim saw crime as a general phenomenon, that taken collectively told us something about the normal functioning of societies. In his view, a healthy social order would lead to a relatively normal level of crime. He doesn't specify what that normal level is, and indeed as we have noted earlier there is little evidence of "normal" crime rates in cities. Crime rates and

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punishment rates over the last few decades would seem to strongly contradict Durkheim's conception of normal levels of crime rates in society.

At the same time, our review suggests that there is indeed a phenomenon of "normal crime" in cities, but one that relates to the concentration of crime at place and not to the overall rate of crime. We think in this context that a different proposition from Durkheim's can be raised at this juncture and should be examined in future studies. Weisburd (2015) has argued there is a law of crime concentration at place, reflecting strong concentrations of crime within a narrow bandwidth. Despite changes in crime rates, the concentration of crime appears to follow a consistent pattern across time, and across cities. This is an intriguing finding that places Durkheim's theorizing in a new light.

Can we use Durkheim's initial insights to consider possible reasons for this law of crime concentration at place? If we follow Durkheim and other theorists that built on his work, we would look to the role of crime at place in defining normative boundaries in society. In this case, we might argue that a certain number of places in the city with severe crime problems serve as lessons for city dwellers more generally. This would fit well with studies that show that crime hot spots are spread throughout a city (Weisburd et al. 2012; Weisburd and Telep 2014). While we have little data on this to date (as we note later when we suggest future directions for research), we might speculate that hot spots of crime, which are often visibly blighted, with abandoned buildings or other signs of decay (Weisburd et al., In Press), and evidence high levels of anti-social behavior (Weisburd et al. 2025), provide a visual representation of how we do not want the streets we live on to look. In this sense the visual cues of crime hot spots, which are spread throughout a city, provide a lesson on where the moral boundaries of place—or what we think it appropriate for places to be like—lie.

This is illustrated in a recent qualitative study that sent researchers out to crime hot spots and cold spot streets with little crime (see Weisburd et al., In Press). The cold spots were often described as having "little to no trash and the homes and yards being well cared for and maintained," whereas on the hot spots the field researchers noted traditional indicators of disorder like lots of trash, broken glass, and boarded-up homes. One cold street was noted by one of the field researchers as having flowers everywhere, decorated front lawns and stoops. "It was the thing I noticed most about the street, the various colors of flowers and the plants growing in the front yards that seemed to have very specific designs and arrangements in each yard. There were steppingstones leading up to front doors, stones leading to backyards with statues, fountains, potted plants, and other decorations that all seemed to match some theme for each particular house." Alternatively, a field researcher described a drug hot spot—"A few empty beer bottles were thrown on the walk side. Walk sides also contained untrimmed bushes. At least three empty lots were observed where no buildings are built, yet stairways are still there that link these empty lots to the main road. Trash was thrown in a couple of spots in the street." On another drug hot spot, the field researchers wrote, "we noticed as soon as we stepped out of the car how dirty the neighborhood was. Trash was basically everywhere, broken furniture was thrown out at the corner of the street, as well as lots of beer bottles that were thrown on both sides of the street. Although buildings are painted in different bright colors, they are damaged and neglected. Sewage water runs on the side of the street like a main water stream, leaving a bad smell for residents and passersby".

Often drug dealers or prostitutes can be seen on these streets, and there are likely to be physical signs of disorder like broken windows, garbage and drug paraphernalia (Felson 2020; Skogan 1992; Weisburd and Mazerolle 2000). In a recent study in Baltimore City, Maryland, large differences were found regarding anti-social behavior on the street between hot spots of crime and streets with little crime (Weisburd et al. 2025). For example, while adults loitering in a public space were observed in less than 15% of streets with little or no crime, this was observed in almost 60% of the highest crime streets. While drug activities or very loud noise was not observed in any of the streets with little or no crime, researchers observed loud noise on almost a quarter of the hottest crime streets, and drug activity on 15% of those streets. It is wrong to over dramatize the decay and disorder on such streets because there is evidence also of residents who seek to improve their streets and make their streets better places to live (Weisburd et al. 2024). As a resident of a high crime street remarked in a study in Baltimore City, "It is not as bad as people think it is" (Weisburd et al. 2024; pg. 10). But nonetheless, to outsiders who observe such streets they are a reminder of what they are trying to prevent happening on the streets they live on. Hot spots of crime tell a story in a city about moral boundaries of place, and that story relates to the geographic boundaries of crime that are tolerated by those communities.

Durkheim also saw crime as an essential element of social cohesion in societies. Erikson (1966), interpreting Durkheim's proposition regarding the functionality of crime argued:

> The deviant individual violates rules of conduct which the rest of the community holds in high respect; and when these people come together to express their outrage over the offense and to bear witness against the offender, they develop a tighter bond of solidarity than existed earlier. The excitement generated by the crime, in other words, quickens the tempo of interaction in the group and creates a climate in which the private sentiments of many separate persons are fused together into a common sense of morality.
>
> (p. 4)

We might speculate that hot spots of crime play a similar role in communities. Residents of cities may express outrage to the police or political representatives regarding such places, and indeed they may band together to respond to disorder and crime at crime hot spots. Weisburd et al. (In Press), for example, note that one of the residents they interviewed "talked about the sense of neighborhood and cooperation among the homeowners and about how he is coordinating a community organization to try to do the work that the city is not doing, such as cleaning and

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community policing. He was carrying papers on which he had written his observations about the area that he planned to discuss with neighbors next month, at their first meeting."

And this brings us back to Durkheim, because crime is a social phenomenon and its tolerance is a social construct. Is society willing to tolerate crime in only a certain proportion of the landscape of a city? Is the law of crime concentration a result of the boundaries of crime at place that citizens are willing to tolerate? Will people become worried and call for action when crime hot spots increase beyond a specific proportion of places in the city or are found closer to their homes?

Criminologists to date have simply documented the fact of the law of crime concentration, they have not conducted systematic research to explain the "why" of this law. What is needed is systematic quantitative studies that seek to explain why crime concentrations remain relatively consistent across cities, and identify cities that do not seem to fit within a law of crime concentration. This will require much larger samples of cities than have been studied so far, and international collaborations that allow us to review the law of crime concentration in non-Western settings (where few studies have been conducted). The collection of data on social and structural characteristics, including land use and street layout will be crucial to the task of providing insights about the law of crime concentration. Finally, more qualitative work will have to be done that examines how residents of cities view crime hot spots, and how such hot spots affect their attitudes and behavior. To date there has been little qualitative work in this area, and if we are to link the law of crime concentration to Durkheim's theory of normal crime, we will need to hear in more depth the narratives of how people understand crime concentrations in cities. And beyond this, researchers should consider how innovations in crime impact upon the concentration of crime. Does the abuse of prescription drugs impact upon the concentration of drug crime, and if so, does it alter crime concentrations in cities? Does cyber crime influence such concentrations, and will we find a law of crime concentration in cyber space as well as city space?

While crime can define moral boundaries of place and may be a functional part of normal societies, it does not mean that we should tolerate crime hot spots. The normality of crime concentrations does not suggest that whatever we do crime will remain at very high levels at crime hot spots. In the first place, as we have already observed, the percentage of streets producing 50% of the crime varies between about 1 and 10% in prior studies. Reducing the number of streets that have large numbers of crimes is achievable. There is already strong evidence that concentration of police at crime hot spots will reduce crime at those places without meaningful displacement to nearby areas (Braga et al. 2014; Braga and Weisburd 2022). Such reductions are certainly a benefit to society if achieved with the cooperation of residents, and without police harassment or violence.[3]

We want to note as well, that our reimagining of Durkheim's proposition of the normality of crime comes with a warning about efforts to eradicate crime, or in our context hot spots of crime. We must recognize that crime is a social fact and that what is seen as necessary for social reaction will change over time, and may as Durkheim suggests be related to the need for illustrations of moral boundaries. We should recognize that hot spots of crime have a social function. This does not mean that we should tolerate crime, or the dangers and risks that accrue to people that live or frequent such places. And as we have already noted, the bandwidth of normality of crime concentrations seems to allow for very high concentrations of crime. But it does mean that in trying to reduce the spread of hot spots of crime in a city, we should recognize that there is a social process in the background that may push against our efforts, that continually redefines society's moral boundaries of place.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Endnotes

[1] In this discussion, Durkheim's use of the term normal does not imply that crime is morally desirable. Rather, he referred to crime as functionally normal: a phenomenon that appears regularly across societies and serves an essential role.

[2] See: https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/usa/united-states/crime-rate-statistics.

[3] See Weisburd et al. 2022 for evidence that such benefits without negative outcomes for residents is possible.

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