Who, What, When, Where: Using Online Data to Study Cities

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Dating back to the classical works produced by the Chicago School in the early 20th century, urban places have largely been studied through broad surveys or smaller scale ethnographic methods. Today, we have access to large multifaceted online data sources that offer both generalizable and highly specific information. Because online data often have geospatial and temporal information embedded within them these sources can be used to develop new ways to answer old questions and observe cities. This talk will demonstrate how Twitter and Place of Interest databases such as SafeGraph, Foursquare, and Google Places can be used to advance urban science, focusing on sociologically informed theories of crime such as Social Disorganization and Routine Activities theories. Additionally, the talk will identify theoretical and methodological puzzles that need to be solved in order to maximize the use of online-based datasets.

Bio: Riley Tucker is a PhD candidate in Criminology & Justice Policy at Northeastern University. His research seeks to advance and develop scientific theories about cities and neighborhoods using computational methodological and analytic tools, with a focus on geospatially informed online data sets. His dissertation uses Twitter data and other online sources to explore how neighborhood features and urban mobility patterns shape crime. Outside of his personal research, he is passionate about his role as the Boston Area Research Initiative Data Consultant, where he provides support to non-profits, students, and curious members of the public who pursue urban research projects. Riley holds a MS in Criminology & Criminal Justice from Northeastern University and a BA in Sociology from Temple University.