

Gated Communities: Gating Out Crime?

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(ABSTRACT)

Gated communities exclude the public by presenting barriers to entry. Barriers take many forms, ranging from simple gates and fences to sophisticated electronic devices and security guards. Today, more than 20,000 communities in the United States are gated, housing a population in excess of 8 million. Those figures continue to rise, and there is no indication that current trends will slow in the immediate future.

While several factors are fueling the growth of gated communities, crime tops the list. This paper evaluates the effect of gating on crime inside gated communities. To provide a context for the paper, a detailed description of gated communities is offered by way of introduction. Scholarly findings and several brief case examples are then presented in order to evaluate the impact of gating on crime.

The notion that gating delivers crime prevention benefits stems from defensible space theory. This paper introduces defensible space theory, discusses the links to gated communities, and uses the findings to evaluate the contentions of defensible space theory. Several additional crime theories are also introduced, and their implications for gated communities discussed.

Gated communities excite a number of concerns. Those that are relevant to planning objectives and ideals are presented in the final chapter of this paper. Areas for further research involving gated communities are also identified. Attention to these issues will further our understanding of gated communities and answer many questions that remain unresolved. Opinions, insights, and recommendations for addressing gated communities and crime are offered in conclusion.