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Ralph B. Taylor

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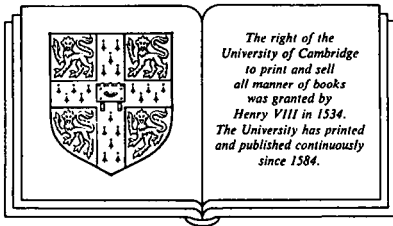
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HUMAN TERRITORIAL FUNCTIONING

**An empirical, evolutionary perspective
on individual and small group territorial
cognitions, behaviors, and consequences**

RALPH B. TAYLOR

*Department of Criminal Justice
Temple University*



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To the three lovely
leading ladies in my life:
MICHELE, MARA, and NYSSA

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SERIES FOREWORD

In recent decades the relationship between human behavior and the physical environment has attracted researchers from the social sciences – psychology, sociology, geography, and anthropology – and from the environmental-design disciplines – architecture, urban and regional planning, and interior design. What is in many respects a new and exciting field of study has developed rapidly. Its multidisciplinary character has led to stimulation and cross-fertilization, on the one hand, and to confusion and difficulty in communication, on the other. Those involved have diverse intellectual styles and goals. Some are concerned with basic and theoretical issues; some, with applied real-world problems of environmental design.

This series offers a common meeting ground. It consists of short books on different topics of interest to all those who analyze environment-behavior links. We hope that the series will provide a useful introduction to the field for students, researchers, and practitioners alike, and will facilitate its evolutionary growth as well.

Our goals are as follows: (1) to represent problems the study of which is relatively well established, with a reasonably substantial body of research and knowledge generated; (2) to recruit authors from a variety of disciplines with a variety of perspectives; (3) to ensure that they not only summarize work on their topic but also set forth a “point of view,” if not a theoretical orientation – we want the books not only to serve as texts but also to advance the field intellectually – and (4) to produce books useful to a broad range of students and other readers from dif-

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ferent disciplines and with different levels of formal professional training. Course instructors will be able to select different combinations of books to meet their particular curricular needs.

Irwin Altman
Daniel Stokols

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PREFACE

The major themes of this volume are captured in the subtitle: the evolutionary origins of protohuman and later human territorial functioning. For such a system to have survived, albeit significantly altered, it must have “benefits” for humans. I suggest that it does; territorial functioning has psychological, social psychological, and ecological outcomes that contribute to orderly person–place relationships and to the well-being of individuals and small groups. My treatment of human territorial functioning is grounded in empirical social science research. Consequently, I circumscribe the concept to microscale, usually delimited locations ranging in size from furnishings (e.g., a chair) up to the scale of a streetblock. I maintain, based on theory and lack of evidence, that the concept does *not* work well when applied to macroscale settings, such as neighborhoods or nations.

The reader may think this treatment of the concept too confining or specialized. Nonetheless, the confusion surrounding the concept of human territoriality will be reduced only if we look carefully at how empirical findings illuminate the concept. And, the findings simply do not extend to larger-scale settings than the ones discussed here. I admit that my view is at variance with the perspective of other writers on this topic.

In addition, whereas others, from Klineberg, who discussed an instinct or drive for possessiveness, to Malmberg, who more recently placed the territorial instinct in the limbic system, have viewed territorial functioning as instinct-based or “hard-wired,” I attempt to show that it is,

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rather, a set of learned, goal-oriented processes. Across times and cultures there is considerable variability, but also notable similarities.

I also differ sharply with the many earlier writers who have suggested that territorial functioning is a source of interpersonal or intergroup aggression and violence. I attest, instead, that research supports the view that human territorial functioning plays crucial roles in smoothing interpersonal and person–place transactions.

My divergent views on human territorial functioning do not, I hope, simply reflect a specialized use of the concept, or my “liberal” biases. I think the usage accords well with everyday meanings. And, in developing the view presented here, I have tried to look at the corpus of relevant research. Much of that has become available only in the last few years. This is the reason, I believe, for the contrast with interpreters who have preceded me.

Although this volume presents a particular model of human territorial functioning, and indicates how research supports this model, the reader should not be misled. The model developed represents an effort to achieve some personal closure on an area of research that has claimed my attention for some time. As a former mentor and colleague recently said, it is much easier to start an area of research than it is to finish one. The perspective developed here represents my attempt to tie up a conceptual bundle, to finish and round out my own contribution to the area. But there is much more work to be done, enough to keep dozens of researchers busy for dozens of years.

In fact, future research on territorial functioning may be much more exciting than the previous work. Once the outlines of relevant processes are understood, investigators can begin to apply the concept to extant problems. Indeed, researchers have already done so as indicated by the work in the areas of disorder and resource conservation. It is to be hoped that this process of application will flourish in the future. Application or more specifically, action research is particularly worthwhile for at least two reasons. It reduces social and environmental problems. Social scientists *do* have tools with which to dissect such problems and guide the implementation of solutions. And, application spurs theoretical clarification and model development.

As of this writing, the globe is dotted with armed clashes of varying intensity, from the Persian Gulf to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, to mention just a few. It was less than six years ago that Mrs. Thatcher settled a difference of opinion with Argentina using “the military option.” Perhaps it is not too much to hope that as a result of this volume, one less person will be willing to say such violence is due to “territoriality” or the “territorial instinct.”

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Acknowledgments customarily conclude with remarks regarding all the helpful sources mentioned earlier, and assignment of sole responsibility for egregious errors to the author. I prefer instead to dispense immediately with such a disclaimer. Therefore, the numerous valuable people mentioned here should not be held responsible for errors, untoward omissions, or sloppy thinking found in this volume. Blame for such blunders rests only with the author.

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