Do moral communities have a spatial dimension? A spatial exploratory analysis of places of worship and violent crime in the city of Recife, Brazil

Edivaldo Constantino das Neves Júnior ·
Breno Caldas de Araujo · **Tatiane**
Almeida de Menezes · **Antonio Paez** ·

Abstract Religious tenets of the type "thou shalt not kill" and their equivalents in many world religions have functioned as *de facto* social policy for determining appropriate and acceptable behavior over the centuries. With the advent of the scientific study of religion, there has been a growth of interest in the role of religions to operate as moral communities. Moral communities, a concept closely related to informal social controls, are of interest in countries and regions where formal controls are weak and ineffective. The objective of this paper is to present a spatial analysis of Violent and Intentional Crime in the city of Recife in Brazil, with a focus on the possible interactions between criminal events and places of worship. Previous research into moral communities has advocated the need for analysis at different scales, and this analysis contributes to the literature by using micro-level data and appropriate spatial analytical tools for spatial point patterns. Analysis is condcuted using three different types of places of worship (Catholic, Evangelical, and Spiritist) and

Edivaldo Constantino das Neves Júnior
A Department, University of XXX
E-mail: `edivaldoconstantino@gmail.com`

Breno Caldas de Araujo
A Department, University of XXX
E-mail: `def@example.edu`

Tatiane Almeida de Menezes
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Gestão e Economia da Saúde, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco
E-mail: `tatianedemenezes@gmail.com`

Antonio Paez
School of Geography and Earth Sciences, McMaster University
E-mail: `paezha@mcmaster.ca`

three types of business establishments as controls (ice cream shops, pharmacies, and supermarkets). The results suggest that Catholic and Spiritist places of worship do not project moral communities geographically more than, say, ice cream shops. The intensity of criminal events in the proximity of Evangelical places of worship, in contrast, is markedly higher than for any of our other referential events.

Keywords Moral communities · Crime · Places of worship · Point pattern analysis · Intensity ·