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Essential Readings

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PART III

The Chicago School: The City, Social Disorganization, and Crime

As the United States proceeded into the 20th century, individualistic theories of crime enjoyed substantial popularity (Gould, 1981). Cesare Lombroso's biological theory, for example, was widely read and accepted (Lindesmith and Levin, 1937). In 1939, Harvard anthropologist E. A. Hooton not only claimed boldly that "criminals are organically inferior," but also proposed that "the elimination of crime can be effected only by the extirpation of the physically, mentally, and morally unfit; or by their complete segregation in a social aseptic environment" (quoted in Vold and Bernard, 1986: 6). Hooton's work may have been extreme, even for its time (see Merton and Montagu, 1940), but it represented a way of thinking that persists more than six decades later: The seeds of crime lie within people and the only way to protect public safety is to incapacitate this dangerous class (see Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; compare with Cullen et al., 1997 and Gordon, 1994).

Other social observers in the early part of the century, however, criticized these individualistic theories for their myopia. While criminal anthropologists like Lombroso and Hooton focused their attention on discerning whether criminals had larger foreheads or more tattoos than noncriminals, they ignored the larger changes in society that were occuring around them. The United States was rapidly moving into the modern era, transforming itself from a land sprinkled with small, stable farming communities into a land dominated by crowded cities that were centered around booming industries and whose residents were constantly in flux. For these social observers, it defied common sense not to see how these vast changes were intimately implicated in the cause of crime. In fact, they claimed that our understanding of the origins and prevention of criminal conduct depended on a careful study of how the forces *outside* individuals prompted their willingness to break the law.

Social Disorganization in the City

Perhaps nowhere was social change more rapid and more dramatic than in the city of Chicago. When first incorporated in 1833, Chicago had a population of just over 4,000. By 1890, this number had climbed to 1 million, and in just 20 years, the population had doubled to 2 million (Palen, 1981). Sheer numbers, however, capture only part of the changes that were taking place. Like other large cities, Chicago was the settling place for virtually every racial and ethnic group, as African Americans traveled to the North in search of a better life and immigrants from Europe ended their journey in the "windy city" that butted up against Lake Michigan. These urban newcomers typically secured work at and settled in the shadows of factories erected in the center of the city. Their lives were hard—they

worked long hours in the factories and lived in overcrowded tenements dirtied by industrial pollution. Upton Sinclair captured the social reality of these inner-city neighborhoods in the title of his book, *The Jungle* (1905).

In this context, it may not be surprising that scholars at the University of Chicago believed that the key to understanding crime lay not in studying the traits of individuals but in studying the traits of neighborhoods. Did it make a difference, they asked, if a child grew up in an inner-city community that was characterized by poverty, a mixing together of diverse peoples (i.e., "heterogeneity"), and by people constantly moving in and, when able, moving out (i.e., "transiency")? And if so, might not the solution to crime lay more in changing neighborhoods than in changing people?

This line of inquiry was developed most clearly by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942 [Chapter 7 in this volume]), who worked at the Institute for Social Research in Chicago and who were deeply influenced by the thinking of sociologists at the University of Chicago. To explain how cities such as Chicago develop, Ernest Burgess (1967[1925]) had theorized that urban areas grow through a process of continual expansion from their inner core toward outer areas. As this growth process matures, we find cities that have a central business or industrial area. Just outside this area is the "zone in transition." It is here that impoverished newcomers settle, attracted by factory jobs and inexpensive housing. In a series of concentric circles, three more zones exist outside the inner city; Burgess called these the "zone of workingmen's homes," the "residential zone," and the "commuters' zone." These areas are settled by people who have adjusted to city life and have accumulated the resources to leave the zone in transition.

Shaw and McKay believed that Burgess's theory of the city might help direct their investigations of juvenile delinquency. If Burgess was correct, then rates of delinquency should be higher in the inner-city areas. In these locations, the intersection of persistent poverty, rapid population growth, heterogeneity, and transiency combined to disrupt the core social institutions of society such as the family; that is, these conditions caused *social disorganization*. They hypothesized that delinquency would be higher in these communities and lower in neighborhoods that were more affluent and stable (i.e., "organized").

But how would they test these ideas? In an innovative and enormous effort in data collection, whose results were published in *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (1942), Shaw and McKay analyzed how measures of crime—such as youths referred to the juvenile court, truancy, and recidivism—were distributed in the zones of the city. By hand, they mapped the addresses of each delinquent, which they then compiled to compute rates of delinquency by census track and then by city zone. They discovered that over time, rates of crime by *area* remained relatively the same—regardless, that is, of which ethnic group resided there. This finding suggested that characteristics of the area, not of the individuals living in the area, regulated levels of delinquency. They also learned, as their theory predicted, that crime rates were pronounced in the zone of transition and became progressively lower as one moved away from the inner city toward the outer zones. This finding supported their contention that social disorganization was a major cause of delinquency (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 30–31).

Just how did social disorganization cause delinquency? Unfortunately, Shaw and McKay did not supply a refined discussion of this concept in which they systematically explored the dimensions of disorganization and how each one was criminogenic (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). Even so, they broadly suggested that social disorganization referred to the breakdown of the social institutions in a community. In the inner city, then, families would be disrupted, schools would be marked by disorder, adult-run activities for youths would be sparse, churches would be poorly attended, and political groups would be ineffectual. When such a pervasive breakdown

occurred, adults would be unable to control youths or to stop competing forms of criminal organization from emerging (e.g., gangs, vice activities). This combination was highly criminogenic. Freed from adult control, youths roamed the streets, where they came into contact with older juveniles who transmitted to them criminal values and skills (see also Thrasher, 1927).

Shaw and McKay gained many of their insights on the process by which youths become embedded in delinquency from in-depth interviews—"life histories"—that they conducted with wayward adolescents (see, e.g., Shaw, 1966 [1930]). In *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1976 [1931]), for example, Shaw compiled the story of Sidney Blotzman, who by age 16 had engaged in numerous crimes, including robbery and sexual assault. Shaw recorded that Sidney had begun his "career in delinquency" by age 7, a career that persisted and grew more serious as he matured. Referring to Sidney's story, Shaw noted that due to his associations with older delinquents and adult criminals, the boy "began to identify himself with the criminal world and to embody in his own philosophy of life the moral values which prevailed in the criminal groups with which he had contact" (p. 228).

But why was Sidney exposed to these criminogenic influences? Here, Shaw reminds the reader that Sidney "lived in one of the most deteriorated and disorganized sections of the city" (p. 229). In these communities, continued Shaw, "the conventional traditions, neighborhood institutions, and public opinion, through which neighborhoods usually effect a control over the behavior [of the] child, were largely disintegrated" (p. 229). The community, however, "was not only disorganized and thus ineffective as a unit of control"; in addition, "various forms of stealing and many organized delinquent and criminal gangs were prevalent in the area" (p. 229). These criminal groups competed for the lives, in effect, of the area's children. "These groups," observed Shaw, "exercised a powerful influence and tended to create a community spirit which not only tolerated but actually fostered delinquent and criminal practices" (p. 229).

In Parts IV and VI, we will discuss two theoretical traditions whose roots extend to the work of Shaw and McKay: differential association/social learning theory and control theory. Thus, the work of Edwin Sutherland (Chapter 10) draws directly on Shaw and McKay's contentions that social areas have different mixes of criminal and conventional influences, and that the exposure to and learning of criminal values, mainly by associating with others in the same neighborhood, is a key source of crime. Sutherland captures these ideas in his "theory of differential association," which is an effort to systematize the insights of Shaw and McKay and of other Chicago School theorists (see, e.g., Thrasher's 1927 work, *The Gang*). Similarly, early statements of control theory, such as that by Reckless (1961) and that by Reiss (1951)—both of whom studied at the University of Chicago—build directly from Shaw and McKay's observations and helped to lay the foundation for today's control theories.

It is ironic that in contemporary criminology, these two traditions, which branched off from Shaw and McKay, now are seen as rival theories of crime (compare Akers, 1998, and Matsueda, 1988, with Costello, 1997, Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990, and Kornhauser, 1978). Although some efforts have been made to *integrate* these two perspectives (see Part XIV), most often advocates of learning and control theories see themselves as advancing incompatible perspectives, only one of which can be correct.

Revitalizing Social Disorganization Theory

Although Shaw and McKay's work was read by subsequent generations of criminologists, by the 1960s their theory of social disorganization had lost its appeal and its ability to direct research. Instead, other theories, advocating new ways of thinking and identifying new questions to be

answered, ascended and captured scholars' attention (see Cole, 1975; Pfohl, 1985). Beginning in the 1980s, however, Shaw and McKay's disorganization perspective earned renewed interest—an interest that has remained until this day.

In part, criminologists reconsidered the value of disorganization theory because of a more general interest in the "ecology" of crime. This approach analyzes how crime rates vary by *ecological units*, such as neighborhoods, cities, countries, states, or nations. (Recall that Shaw and McKay examined how delinquency rates varied by zones of the city.) This approach is often seen as being on the "macro-level." In *micro*-level theories, the concern is with identifying how characteristics of *individuals* (e.g., personality, how much strain a person feels) are related to their involvement in criminal behavior. In *macro*-level theories, however, individuals and their traits are not studied; the concern is only with how the characteristics of geographical areas, such as whether they are disorganized, influence crime rates.

In 1982, Judith and Peter Blau published an article that captured the attention of criminologists. Examining 125 of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, they found that violence was more pronounced in urban areas marked by socioeconomic inequality, especially by a wide gap in riches between African Americans and whites. Indeed, "high rates of criminal violence," concluded the Blaus, "are apparently the price of racial and economic inequalities" (p. 126). This analysis showed the important insights that a macro-level study could uncover. It also was a reminder that governmental policies that increased inequality—such as those embraced in the administration of President Reagan—might make our streets less safe (see also Currie, 1985). At a time when individualistic theories were gaining in prominence (recall that Wilson and Herrnstein's *Crime and Human Nature* was published in 1985), the Blaus' research spoke to the continuing relevance of community characteristics in understanding the roots of crime in America.

Beyond the general interest in ecological research (see Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Reiss and Tonry, 1986), Robert Sampson was most responsible for specifically showing the relevance of using Shaw and McKay's theory to illuminate crime in today's society (see also Bursik, 1988; Pratt and Cullen, 2005). Sampson (1986) argued that crime was high in inner cities because the residents had lost the capacity to exercise "informal social control." Especially in neighborhoods where most families were "broken," the adult resources needed to supervise youths and involve them in wholesome activities were depleted. Coming from a broken home per se was not the key issue, said Sampson. Rather, it was living in a neighborhood where a high proportion of families were headed by a single parent that created a context in which control could not be exercised effectively. Like Shaw and McKay, Sampson stressed that independent of the traits of individuals, communities varied in their capacity to regulate conduct and suppress criminal behavior.

With W. Byron Groves, Sampson (1989) extended this research. Using data from the British Crime Survey, the authors tested Shaw and McKay's idea that in communities marked by poverty, heterogeneity, residential transiency, and family disruption, informal relations and controls would be weakened and, as a result, crime would be high. Previously, empirical tests of Shaw and McKay's perspective had only measured the structural "antecedents" or causes of social disorganization and then examined whether these factors were related to crime (e.g., do communities with more residential mobility have higher rates of crime). These studies took for granted that the social condition in between these structural factors (on the "left" side of the causal chain) and illegal conduct (on the "right" side of the causal chain) was social disorganization. In large part, scholars did not measure social disorganization directly because the existing data sets did not contain information on the extent to

which community members were socially integrated and able to exercise social control over wayward conduct. Instead, they were able to compile data on structural factors from the U.S. Census and data on crime rates from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. Meanwhile, they had no direct measures of the "black box" that lay in between structural factors and crime rates. Again, they merely assumed that this "black box" was a weak or "disorganized" community.

The special value of Sampson and Groves's study was that the British Crime Survey included questions that could be combined to measure whether community members were willing to supervise rowdy teenagers, had friends locally, and participated in neighborhood voluntary organizations. The more these conditions were present, hypothesized Sampson and Groves, the greater the level of social organization; the less these conditions were present, the greater the level of social disorganization. When Sampson and Groves conducted their statistical analysis, they discovered that, to a large extent, the structural factors predicted their measures of social disorganization and, in turn, that weakly organized areas did indeed have higher crime rates. In short, their data lent support to Shaw and McKay's conclusion that social disorganization was a significant cause of community rates of crime (see also Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994).

It is possible, of course, that other community factors, such as the presence of delinquent subcultures, could also intervene between structural factors such as poverty and transiency and crime (Veysey and Messner, 1999). Still, subsequent research has replicated Sampson and Groves's research with data drawn a decade later from the British Crime Survey, thus indicating that Sampson and Groves's results have proven to be consistent over time (Lowenkamp et al., 2003; see also Taylor, 2001). More generally, Sampson and Groves's article furnished persuasive evidence that the social disorganization perspective had a measure of validity and warranted further empirical and theoretical investigation. Indeed, this article generated considerable excitement and did much to revitalize Shaw and McKay's theory. It was not a theory tied to a particular historical juncture—pre-World War II America—but could provide insights into community differences in rates of crime in contemporary times.

Extending Social Disorganization Theory

Theories of crime, however, are not sacred icons to be worshiped at the altar of criminology. No matter how persuasive and elegantly stated, theoretical paradigms should be viewed as provisional understandings of social reality—important in what they allow us to see but not sacrosanct. The challenge is to illuminate how such works might be reconsidered and their explanatory power improved. In this regard, Robert Sampson has recently engaged in two lines of inquiry that have extended Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory in noteworthy ways.

First, in an important essay coauthored with William Julius Wilson, he extends social disorganization theory by placing it within the realities of contemporary America (see Chapter 8 in this part). Sampson and Wilson (1995) accept the basic thesis of disorganization theory that a breakdown of community controls, rooted in structural conditions, is criminogenic. They argue, however, that the Chicago school was incorrect in seeing social disorganization as a "natural" part of the process by which cities grow. Instead, variations in disorganization across communities are intimately linked to *racial inequality* (see Blau and Blau, 1982; Currie, 1985; Peterson et al., 2006; Pfohl, 1985).

Independent of their individual socioeconomic status, African Americans are much more likely to reside in neighborhoods where there is a *concentration* of severe poverty and widespread family disruption ("broken homes")—conditions that spawn disorganization (Sampson and Bean, 2006; Wilson, 2009). Why is this so? According to Sampson and

Wilson, "macrostructural factors"—some economic, some conscious political decisions—are responsible for disproportionately consigning African Americans to these inner-city neighborhoods. These factors include, for example, the loss of jobs due to the deindustrialization of the American economy; the departure of middle-class blacks—who provided the social glue that helped to hold neighborhoods together—to more affluent areas; policies that channeled blacks into dense, high-rise public housing; the lack of investment in keeping up the housing stock in inner-city neighborhoods; and urban renewal that displaced African Americans from their homes and disrupted their communities (see Wilson, 1987, 1996, 2009).

Sampson and Wilson also rekindle the cultural side of social disorganization theory. Although their argument differs somewhat from Shaw and McKay's, they follow these early Chicago theorists in proposing that structural conditions affect the content of the culture in communities. For Sampson and Wilson, the near apartheid conditions in which many African Americans live (see Massey and Denton, 1993) create intense "social isolation—defined as the lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society" (1995: 51). In response, cultural values emerge that do not so much approve of violence and crime but rather define such actions as an unavoidable part of life in the ghetto (see Anderson, Chapter 12 in Part IV; Sampson and Bean, 2006).

In the end, state Sampson and Wilson (1995: 53), the "intersection of race, place, and poverty goes to the heart of our theoretical concerns with society and community organization." The result is that race-based inequality in urban areas fosters the breakdown of the conventional institutions and cultural values needed to restrain criminal conduct. The cost of this inequality is borne most fully by African Americans, who must live in communities where one in 21 black males will be murdered in his lifetime (the rate for white males is 1 in 131) (Sampson and Wilson, 1995: 36).

Second, in conjunction with Stephen Raudenbush and Felton Earls, Robert Sampson (1997) attempts to further elaborate the social disorganization approach in a study that examines rates of violence across 343 Chicago neighborhoods (see Chapter 9 in this part). These authors show that "concentrated disadvantage"—a combined measure of a community's poverty, race and age composition, and family disruption—is related to neighborhood rates of violence, even controlling for the characteristics of the people surveyed. Importantly, they reveal that the effects of concentrated disadvantage are largely mediated by—that is, occur through—the degree of "collective efficacy" in the neighborhood.

But what is this concept of "collective efficacy"? As envisioned by Sampson and his coauthors, collective efficacy is a concept that includes the willingness of community residents both to exercise informal control (e.g., telling youths to quiet down) and to trust and help one another. In a way, the concept of efficacy seems like the opposite of social disorganization (Taylor, 2001: 128). If so, nothing much would be new theoretically, because Sampson et al. would merely be describing the opposite end of the continuum—that is, what an organized community looks like in contrast to a disorganized community. Clearly, there is theoretical overlap between the concepts of "social disorganization" and "collective efficacy," but Sampson and his colleagues are also offering something fresh. Although their ideas are rooted in social disorganization theory, they enrich this perspective in two important ways.

First, whereas Shaw and McKay largely envisioned social organization (as opposed to disorganization) as the presence of *control*, Sampson et al. have added a second component: the notion that neighbors *mutually trust or support one another* (Sampson et al., 1999: 635). Trust or social support is important because it provides a basis on which neighbors might expect others to collaborate with them—to stand behind them—when it becomes necessary to exercise social support (see also Cullen, 1994—Chapter 46 in this volume). Indeed,

empirically, trust and the willingness to engage in informal control are highly intercorrelated. As Sampson et al. found, in reality, control and trust are coterminous; that is, "you don't get one without the other."

Second, social disorganization is typically portrayed as a "condition"—as a state of being into which a person moves or is born. In this sense, it is a *static* factor, or something that more or less constantly surrounds those in a neighborhood. In contrast, Sampson and his colleagues envision collective efficacy as a *dynamic* factor. It is a resource that can be mobilized when the need arises—such as when teenagers become unruly on a street corner or when drug dealers brazenly establish a "crack house" in the neighborhood.

Collective efficacy thus is not simply being organized and having close social ties, but rather is the "*process* of activating or converting social ties to achieve desired outcomes" (Sampson et al., 1999: 635, emphasis in the original). Communities with weak collective efficacy lack the closeness and trust—sometimes called "social capital"—to mobilize as a group and rid their street of troublemakers and disorder (e.g., by personally confronting people, by forming crime watches, by pressuring politicians and the police to "do something" about the problems they face). In contrast, communities high on collective efficacy can amass a unified front to make life for the wayward in their neighborhood uncomfortable by watching them closely, telling them to go elsewhere, and, if necessary, exerting political pressure and getting the police involved (Sampson, 2006).

Although Sampson and his colleagues' recent writings offer important ideas and promise to generate new lines of empirical research, their thinking and findings reinforce the essential truth of Shaw and McKay's theorizing: that is, that strong communities can act to quell disorder while communities weakened by structural problems will be fertile soil for the growth of crime. This general theoretical orientation reminds us that individuals are not islands free from outside influences, but rather are enmeshed in a web of social relations that increase or decrease one's power to influence what transpires in one's neighborhood. Those with the misfortune of residing in isolated, impoverished, disorganized communities have the double difficulty of being exposed to conditions that might permit their criminal involvement and of being less able to do anything about crime when it occurs around them. Thus, they are at risk of being drawn into a criminal lifestyle on the one hand and on the other of being unable to prevent the disorder and victimization they witness, if not personally experience. The vitality and efficacy of community life and relations, as Shaw and McKay understood, matter greatly; this is an insight that must be included in any systematic explanation of the uneven distribution of crime in American society.

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7. Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas

Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay

"Delinquency," observed Shaw and McKay in their classic book Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas, *"has its roots in the dynamic life of the community" (1942: 435). Theories that focus only on personality or biological traits ignore that youths are surrounded by a community that they interact with over many years. These daily experiences, claimed Shaw and McKay, shape patterns of behavior.*

Not all communities, however, are the same. Surveying the urban landscape, Shaw and McKay noted that in more affluent communities, "the similarity of attitudes and values as to social control is expressed in institutions and voluntary associations designed to perpetuate and protect these values" (p. 165). But in areas wracked by poverty and constant social change, the conventional institutions become weak and a value system supportive of crime is nurtured. Shaw and McKay recognized that even in disorganized inner-city communities, parents and other adults try to inculcate children with moral values. However, they must compete aganist a range of criminal influences—gangs, adult criminals, ongoing illegal enterprises—that simply are not present in organized communities. Further, these influences are difficult to uproot; once delinquent traditions take hold, they are transmitted from one generation to the next, typically through interactions in neighborhood peer groups.

One criticism of Shaw and McKay's theory is that it paints too rosy a picture of communities outside the inner city. Although serious predatory crimes are more pronounced in ghetto areas, delinquency is commonplace among youths in all communities. It is possible that social disorganization and cultural values supportive of crime are more evenly spread across communities than Shaw and McKay anticipated.

Finally, Shaw and McKay's perspective has important policy implications: If community disorganization is the main source of delinquency, then the solution to crime is to organize communities. Toward this end, in the early 1930s Shaw took steps to put theory into practice by initiating the Chicago Area Project, called the "first systematic challenge to the dominance of psychology and psychiatry in public and private programs for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency" (Schlossman et al., 1984). The Project involved such activities as creating recreational programs, sprucing up the physical appearances of the neighborhood so as to reduce signs of disorder, working with school or criminal justice officials to see how problem youths might be helped, and using community residents to counsel the neighborhood's youngsters. The precise effectiveness of the Chicago Area Project is not known, although some evidence exists that it helped to reduce delinquency (Schlossman et al., 1984). Regardless, the Project illuminates an insight that has relevance to today: Interventions—whether by the police or by correctional officials—that ignore

community dynamics will be limited in their ability to prevent the onset of criminal conduct.

Reference

Schlossman, Steven, Gail Zellman, and Richard Shavelson, with Michael Sedlak and Jane Cobb. 1984. *Delinquency Prevention in South Chicago: A Fifty-Year Assessment of the Chicago Area Project.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

It is clear from the data included in this volume that there is a direct relationship between conditions existing in local communities of American cities and differential rates of delinquents and criminals. Communities with high rates have social and economic characteristics which differentiate them from communities with low rates. Delinquency—particularly group delinquency, which constitutes a preponderance of all officially recorded offenses committed by boys and young men—has its roots in the dynamic life of the community.

. . . It may be observed, in the first instance, that the variations in rates of officially recorded delinquents in communities of the city correspond very closely with variations in economic status. The communities with the highest rates of delinquents are occupied by those segments of the population whose position is most disadvantageous in relation to the distribution of economic, social, and cultural values. Of all the communities in the city, these have the fewest facilities for acquiring the economic goods indicative of status and success in our conventional culture. Residence in the community is in itself an indication of inferior status, from the standpoint of persons residing in the more prosperous areas. It is a handicap in securing employment and in making satisfactory advancement in industry and the professions. Fewer opportunities are provided for securing the training, education, and contacts which facilitate advancement in the fields of business, industry, and the professions.

The communities with the lowest rates of delinquents, on the other hand, occupy a relatively high position in relation to the economic and social hierarchy of the city. Here the residents are relatively much more secure; and adequate provision is offered to young people for securing the material possessions symbolic of success and the education, training, and personal contacts which facilitate their advancement in the conventional careers they may pursue. . . .

Differential Systems of Values

In general, the more subtle differences between types of communities in Chicago may be encompassed within the general proposition that in the areas of low rates of delinquents there is more or less uniformity, consistency, and universality of conventional values and attitudes with respect to child care, conformity to law, and related matters; whereas in the high-rate areas systems of competing and conflicting moral values have developed. Even though in the latter situation conventional traditions and institutions are dominant, delinquency has developed as a powerful competing way of life. It derives its impelling force in the boy's life from the fact that it provides a means of securing economic gain, prestige, and other human satisfactions and is embodied in delinquent groups and criminal organizations, many of which have great influence, power, and prestige.

In the areas of high economic status where the rates of delinquents are low there is, in general, a similarity in the attitudes of the residents with reference to conventional values, as has been said, especially those related to the welfare of children. This is illustrated by the practical unanimity of opinion as to the desirability of education and constructive leisure-time activities and of the need for a general health program. It is shown, too, in the subtle, yet easily recognizable, pressure exerted upon children to keep them engaged in conventional activities, and in the resistance offered by the community to behavior which

threatens the conventional values. It does not follow that all the activities participated in by members of the community are lawful; but, since any unlawful pursuits are likely to be carried out in other parts of the city, children living in the low-rate communities are, on the whole, insulated from direct contact with these deviant forms of adult behavior.

In the middle-class areas and the areas of high economic status, moreover, the similarity of attitudes and values as to social control is expressed in institutions and voluntary associations designed to perpetuate and protect these values. Among these may be included such organizations as the parent-teachers associations, women's clubs, service clubs, churches, neighborhood centers, and the like. Where these institutions represent dominant values, the child is exposed to, and participates in a significant way in one mode of life only. While he may have knowledge of alternatives, they are not integral parts of the system in which he participates.

In contrast, the areas of low economic status, where the rates of delinquents are high, are characterized by wide diversity in norms and standards of behavior. The moral values range from those that are strictly conventional to those in direct opposition to conventionality as symbolized by the family, the church, and other institutions common to our general society. The deviant values are symbolized by groups and institutions ranging from adult criminal gangs engaged in theft and the marketing of stolen goods, on the one hand, to quasi-legitimate businesses and the rackets through which partial or complete control of legitimate business is sometimes exercised, on the other. Thus, within the same community, theft may be defined as right and proper in some groups and as immoral, improper, and undesirable in others. In some groups wealth and prestige are secured through acts of skill and courage in the delinquent or criminal world, while in neighboring groups any attempt to achieve distinction in this manner would result in extreme disapprobation. Two conflicting systems of economic activity here present roughly equivalent opportunities for employment and for promotion. Evidence of success in the criminal world is indicated by the presence of adult criminals whose clothes and automobiles indicate unmistakably that they have prospered in their chosen fields. The values missed and the greater risks incurred are not so clearly apparent to the young.

Children living in such communities are exposed to a variety of contradictory standards and forms of behavior rather than to a relatively consistent and conventional pattern. More than one type of moral institution and education are available to them. A boy may be familiar with, or exposed to, either the system of conventional activities or the system of criminal activities, or both. Similarly, he may participate in the activities of groups which engage mainly in delinquent activities, those concerned with conventional pursuits, or those which alternate between the two worlds. His attitudes and habits will be formed largely in accordance with the extent to which he participates in and becomes identified with one or the other of these several types of groups.

Conflicts of values necessarily arise when boys are brought in contact with so many forms of conduct not reconcilable with conventional morality as expressed in church and school. A boy may be found guilty of delinquency in the court, which represents the values of the larger society, for an act which has had at least tacit approval in the community in which he lives. It is perhaps common knowledge in the neighborhood that public funds are embezzled and that favors and special consideration can be received from some public officials through the payment of stipulated sums; the boys assume that all officials can be influenced in this way. They are familiar with the location of illegal institutions in the community and with the procedures through which such institutions are opened and kept in operation; they know where stolen goods can be sold and the kinds of merchandise for which there is a ready market; they know what the rackets are; and they see in fine clothes, expensive cars, and other lavish

expenditures the evidences of wealth among those who openly engage in illegal activities. All boys in the city have some knowledge of these activities; but in the inner-city areas they are known intimately, in terms of personal relationships, while in other sections they enter the child's experience through more impersonal forms of communication, such as motion pictures, the newspaper, and the radio.

Other types of evidence tending to support the existence of diverse systems of values in various areas are to be found in the data on delinquency and crime.... [V]ariations by local areas in the number and rates of adult offenders were presented. When translated into its significance for children, the presence of a large number of adult criminals in certain areas means that children there are in contact with crime as a career and with the criminal way of life, symbolized by organized crime. In this type of organization can be seen the delegation of authority, the division of labor, the specialization of function, and all the other characteristics common to well-organized business institutions wherever found.

Similarly, the delinquency data presented graphically on spot maps and rate maps in the preceding pages give plausibility to the existence of a coherent system of values supporting delinquent acts. In making these interpretations it should be remembered that delinquency is essentially group behavior. A study of boys brought into the Juvenile Court of Cook Country during the year 1928 revealed that 81.8 percent of these boys committed the offenses for which they were brought to court as members of groups. And when the offenses were limited to stealing, it was found that 89 percent of all offenders were taken to court as group or gang members. In many additional cases where the boy actually committed his offense alone, the influence of companions was, nevertheless, apparent. This point is illustrated in certain cases of boys charged with stealing from members of their own families, where the theft clearly reflects the influence and instigation of companions, and in instances where the problems of the boy charged with incorrigibility reveal conflicting values, those of the family competing with those of the delinquent group for his allegiance.

The heavy concentration of delinquency in certain areas means, therefore, that boys living in these areas are in contact not only with individuals who engage in proscribed activity but also with groups which sanction such behavior and exert pressure upon their members to conform to group standards. Examination of the distribution map reveals that, in contrast with the areas of concentration of delinquents, there are many other communities where the cases are so widely dispersed that the chances of a boy's having intimate contact with other delinquents or with delinquent groups are comparatively slight.

The importance of the concentration of delinquents is seen most clearly when the effect is viewed in a temporal perspective. The maps representing distribution of delinquents at successive periods indicate that, year after year, decade after decade, the same areas have been characterized by these concentrations. This means that delinquent boys in these areas have contact not only with other delinquents who are their contemporaries but also with older offenders, who in turn had contact with delinquents preceding them, and so on back to the earliest history of the neighborhood. This contact means that the traditions of delinquency can be and are transmitted down through successive generations of boys, in much the same way that language and other social forms are transmitted...

The way in which boys are inducted into unconventional behavior has been revealed by large numbers of case studies of youths living in areas where the rates of delinquents are high. Through the boy's own life-story the wide range of contacts with other boys has been revealed. These stories indicate how at early ages the boys took part with older boys in delinquent activities, and how, as they themselves acquired experience, they initiated others into the same pursuits. These cases reveal also the steps through which members are incorporated into the delinquent group

organization. Often at early ages boys engage in malicious mischief and simple acts of stealing. As their careers develop, they become involved in more serious offenses, and finally become skilled workmen or specialists in some particular field of criminal activity. In each of these phases the boy is supported by the sanction and the approbation of the delinquent group to which he belongs . . .

Taken together, these studies indicate that most delinquent acts are committed by boys in groups, that delinquent boys have frequent contact with other delinquents, that the techniques for specific offenses are transmitted through delinquent group organization, and that in his officially proscribed activity the boy is supported and sustained by the delinquent group to which he belongs.

Differential Social Organization

Other subtle differences among communities are to be found in the character of their local institutions, especially those specifically related to the problem of social control. The family, in areas of high rates of delinquents, is affected by the conflicting systems of values and the problems of survival and conformity with which it is confronted. Family organization in high-rate areas is affected in several different ways by the divergent systems of values encountered. In the first place, it may be made practically impotent by the existing interrelationships between the two systems. Ordinarily, the family is thought of as representing conventional values and opposed to deviant forms of behavior. Opposition from families within the area to illegal practices and institutions is lessened, however, by the fact that each system may be contributing in certain ways to the economic well-being of many large family groups. Thus, even if a family represents conventional values, some member, relative, or friend may be gaining a livelihood through illegal or quasi-legal institutions—a fact tending to neutralize the family's opposition to the criminal system.

Another reason for the frequent ineffectiveness of the family in directing the boys' activities along conventional lines is doubtless the allegiance which the boys may feel they owe to delinquent groups. A boy is often so fully incorporated into the group that it exercises more control than does the family. This is especially true in those neighborhoods where most of the parents are European-born. There the parents' attitudes and interests reflect an Old World background, while their children are more fully Americanized and more sophisticated, assuming in many cases the role of interpreter. In this situation the parental control is weakened, and the family may be ineffective in competing with play groups and organized gangs in which life, though it may be insecure, is undeniably colorful, stimulating, and enticing.

A third possible reason for ineffectiveness of the family is that many problems with which it is confronted in delinquency areas are new problems, for which there is no traditional solution. An example is the use of leisure time by children. This is not a problem in the Old World or in rural American communities, where children start to work at an early age and have a recognized part in the system of production. Hence, there are no time-honored solutions for difficulties which arise out of the fact that children in the city go to work at a later age and have much more leisure at their disposal. In the absence of any accepted solution for this problem, harsh punishment may be administered; but this is often ineffective, serving only to alienate the children still more from family and home.

Other differences between high-rate and low-rate areas in Chicago are to be seen in the nature of the existing community organization. Thomas and Znaniecki have analyzed the effectively organized community in terms of the presence of social opinion with regard to problems of common interest, identical or at least consistent attitudes with reference to these problems, the ability to reach approximate unanimity on the question of how a problem should be dealt with, and the ability to carry this solution into action through harmonious co-operation.

Such practical unanimity of opinion and action does exist, on many questions, in areas where the

rates of delinquents are low. But, in the high-rate areas, the very presence of conflicting systems of values operates against such unanimity. Other factors hindering the development of consistently effective attitudes with reference to these problems of public welfare are the poverty of these high-rate areas, the wide diversity of cultural backgrounds represented there, and the fact that the outward movement of population in a city like Chicago has resulted in the organization of life in terms of ultimate residence. Even though frustrated in his attempts to achieve economic security and to move into other areas, the immigrant, living in areas of first settlement, often has defined his goals in terms of the better residential community into which he hopes some day to move. Accordingly, the immediate problems of his present neighborhood may not be of great concern to him...

Briefly summarized, it is assumed that the differentiation of areas and the segregation of population within the city have resulted in wide variation of opportunities in the struggle for position within our social order. The groups in the areas of lowest economic status find themselves at a disadvantage in the struggle to achieve the goals idealized in our civilization. These differences are translated into conduct through the general struggle for those economic symbols which signify a desirable position in the larger social order. Those persons who occupy a disadvantageous position are involved in a conflict between the goals assumed to be attainable in a free society and those actually attainable for a large proportion of the population. It is understandable, then, that the economic position of persons living in the areas of least opportunity should be translated at times into unconventional conduct, in an effort to reconcile the idealized status and their practical prospects of attaining this status. Since, in our culture, status is determined largely in economic terms, the differences between contrasted areas in terms of economic status become the most important differences. Similarly, as might be expected, crimes against property are most numerous.

The physical, economic, and social conditions associated with high rates of delinquents in local communities occupied by white population exist in exaggerated form in most of the Negro areas. Of all the population groups in the city, the Negro people occupy the most disadvantageous position in relation to the distribution of economic and social values. Their efforts to achieve a more satisfactory and advantageous position in the economic and social life of the city are seriously thwarted by many restrictions with respect to residence, employment, education, and social and cultural pursuits. These restrictions have contributed to the development of conditions within the local community conducive to an unusually large volume of delinquency....

The development of divergent systems of values requires a type of situation in which traditional conventional control is either weak or nonexistent. It is a well-known fact that the growth of cities and the increase in devices for transportation and communication have so accelerated the rate of change in our society that the traditional means of social control, effective in primitive society and in isolated rural communities, have been weakened everywhere and rendered especially ineffective in large cities. Moreover, the city, with its anonymity, its emphasis on economic rather than personal values, and its freedom and tolerance, furnishes a favorable situation of the development of devices to improve one's status, outside of the conventionally accepted and approved methods. This tendency is stimulated by the fact that the wide range of secondary social contacts in modern life operates to multiply the wishes of individuals. The automobile, motion picture, magazine and newspaper advertising, the radio, and other means of communication flaunt luxury standards before all, creating or helping to create desires which often cannot be satisfied with the meager facilities available to families in areas of low economic status. The urge to satisfy the wishes and desires so created has helped to bring into existence and to perpetuate the existing system of criminal activities.

It is recognized that in a free society the struggle to improve one's status in terms of accepted values is common to all persons in all social strata. And it is a well-known fact that attempts are made by some persons in all economic classes to improve their positions by violating the rules and laws designed to regulate economic activity. However, it is assumed that these violations with reference to property are most frequent where the prospect of thus enhancing one's social status outweighs the chances for loss of position and prestige in the competitive struggle. It is in this connection that the existence of a system of values supporting criminal behavior becomes important as a factor in shaping individual life-patterns, since it is only where such a system exists that the person through criminal activity may acquire the material goods so essential to status in our society and at the same time increase, rather than lose, his prestige in the smaller group system of which he has become an integral part.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to say that a community is socially "disorganized"? Why is crime less likely to occur in an organized community?
2. Why do Shaw and McKay take special pains to point out that delinquency usually occurs in groups? How do they believe that peer groups in the inner city contribute to the causation of crime?
3. Although written several decades ago, how might Shaw and McKay's theory help to explain the occurence of street violence in today's inner-city communities?
4. Would Shaw and McKay favor efforts to fight crime by "getting tough" and locking up more offenders, including juveniles, in prison?

8. A Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality

Robert J. Sampson and William Julius Wilson

Conservative commentators on public policy are fond of attributing crime in the inner cities to the faulty culture of community residents. "If youths only had good values, respected the law, dressed the right way, and saw the value of schooling," so the argument goes, "they would stay out of trouble, get good jobs, and achieve the American Dream."

Many criminologists reject such thinking not only because it is simplistic, but also because it conveniently ignores the harsh lives that inner-city people face—from birth through adulthood. If culture is to blame, then there is no need to pay attention to the potential "root causes" of lawlessness—conditions such as poverty, inadequate health care, disrupted families, schools in shambles, and the depletion of economic opportunity as jobs move to the suburbs and to other nations. The focus on culture also masks the fact that many of these harsh conditions do not simply emerge naturally but are the result of political choices by elected officials who do little or nothing about them. In short, scholars see attributing crime to "bad culture" as dangerous because it obscures the role of "bad structures" in causing criminal behavior.

Although the position of structural criminologists is understandable, Sampson and Wilson suggest that ignoring the prevailing culture in urban areas results in an incomplete understanding of why crime takes place. They see culture not as the simple internalization of antisocial values but as the acquisition of "cognitive landscapes." Consider the case of violence. Inner-city residents do not espouse "hurting others" as a cherished value. But what if children grow up in a community in which they witness bullet-ridden bodies lying in public spaces or perhaps see older youths brandishing weapons? In this context, using lethal violence enters the mind as a potential choice to be made and, in some circumstances, as an unavoidable thing to do (such as when one's honor is challenged). In neighborhoods bereft of such experiences, however, youths are unlikely even to consider pulling out a gun as a realistic option to settle disputes. Such extreme violence is not seen, cannot be modeled, and just is not part of their "congnitive landscape"; it is virtually "inconceivable." When it does occur, the violence is so shocking and so unexpected that it becomes newsworthy and is plastered all over the evening news.

Sampson and Wilson understand, however, that a purely cultural explanation of inner-city crime and violence has limited merit. Identifying the content of cultures that generate crime is an important task. But, a complete explanation of

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criminal conduct must explain what initially causes and then sustains the influence of criminogenic cultures.

In a somewhat complex analysis, Sampson and Wilson single out a critical factor that underlies the crime-inducing cognitive landscapes that flourish in inner cities: social isolation *or, in their words, "the lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society." They observe that a peculiar reality of American society is the extreme racial segregation of African Americans residing in many major cities (see also Massey and Denton, 1993; Peterson et al., 2006). In disadvantaged urban communities, youths live in segregated housing, attend schools in which virtually every student is a minority, and rarely travel outside the boundaries of their immediate neighborhood. These youths are cut off from the kind of daily routines that kids in more affluent areas witness, take for granted, and implicitly learn from. In many well-to-do suburbs, for example, youngsters see parents go off to nice jobs each day, the children are exposed to an array of enriching cultural experiences (including "taking lessons"), they "summer" at the country club and the beach house, they know that their friends are all going to college, and so on. The American Dream is not really a "dream" but a cognitive expectation. This is not the case for many inner-city youths, whose landscape is devoid of daily examples of how to participate in and profit from such conventional social roles (Sampson and Bean, 2006).*

Finally, Sampson and Wilson do not view this social isolation as a "bad choice" made by inner-city residents but rather as the result of persisting racial inequality. Racial inequality is the product both of conscious political decisions—such as permitting racial discrimination in home purchases and "ghettoizing" minorities in high-rise public housing erected in geographically isolated areas—and of broad macro-sociological changes—such as the massive movement of jobs out of the inner city. In the end, these structural forces have isolated minorities in neighborhoods marked by extreme poverty and social disorganization, and they have effectively cut off residents from mainstream American society. In this structural context, cultural values or "cognitive landscapes" conducive to crime emerge and are only weakly rivaled by alternative ways of understanding the broader social world and the possibilities it holds (Wilson, 2009).

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Our purpose in this chapter is to address one of the central yet difficult issues facing criminology—race and violent crime. . . .

[W]e advance in this chapter a theoretical strategy that incorporates both structural and cultural arguments regarding race, crime, and inequality in American cities. In contrast to psychologically based relative deprivation theories and the subculture of violence, we view the race and crime linkage from contextual lenses that highlight the very different ecological

contexts that blacks and whites reside in—regardless of individual characteristics. The basic thesis is that macro-social patterns of residential inequality give rise to the social isolation and ecological concentration of the truly disadvantaged, which in turn leads to structural barriers and cultural adaptations that undermine social organizations and hence the control of crime. This thesis is grounded in what is actually an old idea in criminology that has been overlooked in the race and crime debate—the importance of communities.

The Community Structure of Race and Crime

Unlike the dominant tradition in criminology that seeks to distinguish offenders from nonoffenders, the macrosocial or community level of explanation asks what it is about community structures and cultures that produces differential rates of crime (Bursik, 1988; Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Short, 1985). As such, the goal of macro-level research is not to explain individual involvement in criminal behavior but to isolate characteristics of communities, cities, or even societies that lead to high rates of criminality (Byrne and Sampson, 1986; Short, 1985)....

The Ecological Concentration of Race and Social Dislocations

Having demonstrated the similarity of black-white variations by ecological context, we turn to the second logical question. To what extent are blacks as a group differentially exposed to criminogenic structural conditions?...

The combination of urban poverty and family disruption concentrated by race is particularly severe.... In not one city over 100,000 in the United States do blacks live in ecological equality with whites when it comes to these basic features of economic and family organization. Accordingly, racial differences in poverty and family disruption are so strong that the "worst" urban contexts in which whites reside are considerably better than the average context of black communities (Sampson, 1987: 354).

Taken as a whole, these patterns underscore what W. J. Wilson (1987) has labeled "concentration effects," that is, the effects of living in a neighborhood that is overwhelmingly impoverished. These concentration effects, reflected in a range of outcomes from degree of labor force attachment to social deviance, are created by the constraints and opportunities that the residents of inner-city neighborhoods face in terms of access to jobs and job networks, involvement in quality schools, availability of marriageable partners, and exposure to conventional role models.

The social transformation of the inner city in recent decades has resulted in an increased concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population—especially poor, female-headed families with children. Whereas one of every five poor blacks resided in ghetto or extreme poverty areas in 1970, by 1980 nearly two out of every five did so (W. J. Wilson et al., 1988: 131). This change has been fueled by several macrostructural forces. In particular, urban minorities have been vulnerable to structural economic changes related to the deindustrialization of central cities (e.g., the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries; increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors; and relocation of manufacturing out of the inner city). The exodus of middle-and upper-income black families from the inner city has also removed an important social buffer that could potentially deflect the full impact of prolonged joblessness and industrial transformation. This thesis is based on the assumption that the basic institutions of an area (churches, schools, stores, recreational facilities, etc.) are more likely to remain viable if the core of their support comes from more economically stable families in inner-city neighborhoods (W. J. Wilson, 1987: 56). The social milieu of increasing stratification among blacks differs significantly

from the environment that existed in inner cities in previous decades (see also Hagedorn, 1988)....

In short, the foregoing discussion suggests that macrostructural factors—both historic and contemporary—have combined to concentrate urban black poverty and family disruption in the inner city. These factors include but are not limited to racial segregation, structural economic transformation and black male joblessness, class-linked out-migration from the inner city, and housing discrimination. It is important to emphasize that when segregation and concentrated poverty represent structural constraints embodied in public policy and historical patterns of racial subjugation, notions that individual differences (or self-selection) explain community-level effects on violence are considerably weakened (see Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994)....

The consequences of these differential ecological distributions by race raise the substantively plausible hypothesis that correlations of race and crime may be systematically confounded with important differences in community contexts....

More specifically, we posit that the most important determinant of the relationship between race and crime is the differential distribution of blacks in communities characterized by (1) *structural social disorganization* and (2) *cultural social isolation,* both of which stem from the concentration of poverty, family disruption, and residential instability....

The Structure of Social (Dis)organization

In their original formulation Shaw and McKay held that low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility led to the disruption of community social organization, which in turn accounted for variations in crime and delinquency rates (1942; 1969). As recently extended by Kornhauser (1978), Bursik (1988), and Sampson and Groves (1989), the concept of social disorganization may be seen as the inability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls. The *structural* dismensions of community social disorganization refer to the prevalence and interdependence of social networks in a community—both informal (e.g., the density of acquaintanceship; intergenerational kinship ties; level of anonymity) and formal (e.g., organizational participation; institutional stability)—and in the span of collective supervision that the community directs toward local problems.

This social-disorganization approach is grounded in what Kasarda and Janowitz (1974: 329) call the "systemic" model, where the local community is viewed as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks, and formal and informal associational ties are rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes (see also Sampson, 1991). From this view social organization and social *dis*organization are seen as different ends of the same continuum of systemic networks of community social control. As Bursik (1988) notes, when formulated in this way, social disorganization is clearly separable not only from the processes that may lead to it (e.g., poverty, residential mobility), but also from the degree of criminal behavior that may be a result. This conceptualization also goes beyond the traditional account of community as a strictly geographical or spatial phenomenon by focusing on the social and organizational networks of local residents (see Leighton, 1988).

Evidence favoring social-disorganization theory is available with respect both to its structural antecedents and to mediating processes....

Boiled down to its essentials, then, our theoretical framework linking social-disorganization theory with research on urban poverty and political economy suggests that macrosocial forces (e.g., segregation, migration, housing discrimination, structural transformation of the economy) interact with local community-level factors (e.g., residential turnover, concentrated poverty, family disruption) to impede social organization. This is a

distinctly sociological viewpoint, for it focuses attention on the proximate structural characteristics and mediating processes of community social organization that help explain crime, while also recognizing the larger historical, social, and political forces shaping local communities.

Social Isolation and Community Culture

Although social-disorganization theory is primarily structural in nature, it also focuses on how the ecological segregation of communities gives rise to what Kornhauser (1978: 75) terms *cultural* disorganization—the attenuation of societal cultural values. Poverty, heterogeneity, anonymity, mutual distrust, institutional instability, and other structural features of urban communities are hypothesized to impede communication and obstruct the quest for common values, thereby fostering cultural diversity with respect to nondelinquent values. For example, an important component of Shaw and McKay's theory was that disorganized communities spawned delinquent gangs with their own subcultures and norms perpetuated through cultural transmission.

Despite their relative infrequency, ethnographic studies generally support the notion that structurally disorganized communities are conducive to the emergence of cultural value systems and attitudes that seem to legitimate, or at least provide a basis of tolerance for, crime and deviance....

[C]ommunity contexts seem to shape what can be termed *cognitive landscapes* or ecologically structured norms (e.g., normative ecologies) regarding appropriate standards and expectations of conduct. That is, in structurally disorganized slum communities it appears that a system of values emerges in which crime, disorder, and drug use are less than fervently condemned and hence expected as part of everyday life. These ecologically structured social perceptions and tolerances in turn appear to influence the probability of criminal outcomes and harmful deviant behavior (e.g., drug use by pregnant women)....

A renewed appreciation for the role of cultural adaptations is congruent with the notion of *social isolation*—defined as the lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society (W. J. Wilson, 1987: 60). According to this line of reasoning, the social isolation fostered by the ecological concentration of urban poverty deprives residents not only of resources and conventional role models, but also of cultural learning from mainstream social networks that facilitate social and economic advancement in modern industrial society (W. J. Wilson, 1991). Social isolation is specifically distinguished from the culture of poverty by virtue of its focus on adaptations to constraints and opportunities rather than internalization of norms.

As Ulf Hannerz noted in his seminal work *Soulside,* it is thus possible to recognize the importance of macrostructural constraints—that is, avoid the extreme notions of the culture of poverty or culture of violence, and yet see the "merits of a more subtle kind of cultural analysis" (1969: 182). One could hypothesize a difference, on the one hand, between a jobless family whose mobility is impeded by the macrostructural constraints in the economy and the larger society but nonetheless lives in an area with a relatively low rate of poverty, and on the other hand, a jobless family that lives in an inner-city ghetto neighborhood that is influenced not only by these same constraints but also by the behavior of other jobless families in the neighborhood (Hannerz, 1969: 184; W. J. Wilson, 1991). The latter influence is one of culture—the extent to which individuals follow their inclinations as they have been developed by learning or influence from other members of the community (Hannerz, 1969).

Ghetto-specific practices such as an overt emphasis on sexuality and macho values, idleness, and public drinking are often denounced by those who reside in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods. But because such practices occur much

more frequently there than in middle-class society, largely because of social organizational forces, the transmission of these modes of behavior by precept, as in role modeling, is more easily facilitated (Hannerz, 1969). For example, youngsters are more likely to see violence as a way of life in inner-city ghetto neighborhoods. They are more likely to witness violent acts, to be taught to be violent by exhortation, and to have role models who do not adequately control their own violent impulses or restrain their own anger. Accordingly, given the availability of and easy access to firearms, knives, and other weapons, adolescent experiments with macho behavior often have deadly consequences (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

The concept of social isolation captures this process by implying that contact between groups of different class and/or racial backgrounds either is lacking or has become increasingly intermittent, and that the nature of this contact enhances effects of living in a highly concentrated poverty area. Unlike the concept of the culture of violences, then, social isolation does not mean that ghetto-specific practices become internalized, take on a life of their own, and therefore continue to influence behavior no matter what the contextual environment. Rather, it suggests that reducing structural inequality would not only decrease the frequency of these practices; it would also make their transmission by precept less efficient. So in this sense we advocate a renewed appreciation for the ecology of culture, but not the monolithic and hence noncontextual culture implied by the subculture of poverty and violence.

Discussion

Rejecting both the "individualistic" and "materialist" fallacies, we have attempted to delineate a theoretical strategy that incorporates both structural and cultural arguments regarding race, crime, and urban inequality in American cities. Drawing on insights from social-disorganization theory and recent research on urban poverty, we believe this strategy provides new ways of thinking about race and crime. First and foremost, our perspective views the link between race and crime through contextual lenses that highlight the very different ecological contexts in which blacks and whites reside—regardless of individual characteristics. Second, we emphasize that crime rates among blacks nonetheless vary by ecological characteristics, just as they do for whites. Taken together, these facts suggest a powerful role for community context in explaining race and crime.

Our community-level explanation also departs from conventional wisdom. Rather than attributing to acts of crime a purely economic motive springing from relative deprivation—an individual-level psychological concept—we focus on the mediating dimensions of community social organization to understand variations in crime across areas. Morever, we acknowledge and try to specify the macrosocial forces that contribute to the social organization of local communities. Implicit in this attempt is the incorporation of the political economy of place and the role of urban inequality in generating racial differences in community structure. As Wacquant observes, American urban poverty is "preeminently a *racial poverty*... rooted in the *ghetto* as a historically specific social form and mechanism of racial domination" (1991: 36, emphasis in original). This intersection of race, place, and poverty goes to the heart of our theoretical concern with societal and community organization.

Furthermore, we incorporate culture into our theory in the form of social isolation and ecological landscapes that shape perceptions and cultural patterns of learning. This culture is not seen as inevitably tied to race, but more to the varying structural contexts produced by residential and macroeconomic change, concentrated poverty, family instability, and intervening patterns of social disorganization. Perhaps controversially, then, we differ from the recent wave of structuralist research on the culture of violence (for a review see Sampson and Lauritsen 1994). In an

interesting methodological sleight of hand, scholars have dismissed the relevance of culture based on the analysis of census data that provide no measures of culture whatsoever (see especially Blau and Blau 1982). We believe structural criminologists have too quickly dismissed the role of values, norms, and learning as they interact with concentrated poverty and social isolation. In our view, macrosocial patterns of residential inequality give rise to the social isolation and concentration of the truly disadvantaged, engendering cultural adaptations that undermine social organization.

Finally, our conceptualization suggests that the roots of urban violence among today's 15- to 21-year-old cohort may stem from childhood socialization that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Consider that this cohort was born between 1970 and 1976 and spent its childhood in the context of a rapidly changing urban environment unlike that of any previous point in U.S. history. As documented in detail by W. J. Wilson (1987), the concentration of urban poverty and other social dislocations began increasing sharply in about 1970 and continued unabated through the decade and into the 1980s. As but one example, the proportion of black families headed by women increased by over 50 percent from 1970 to 1984 alone (W. J. Wilson 1987: 26). Large increases were also seen in the ecological concentration of ghetto poverty, racial segregation, population turnover, and joblessness. These social dislocations were, by comparison, relatively stable in earlier decades. Therefore, the logic of our theoretical model suggests that the profound changes in the urban structure of minority communities in the 1970s may hold the key to understanding recent increases in violence. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. What is a "cognitive landscape"? How might such a landscape make crime more likely in some neighborhoods and less likely in other neighborhoods?
2. What do Sampson and Wilson mean by the concept of "social isolation"? Describe what life might be like in an isolated inner-city neighborhood. How would it differ from or be similar to your life growing up? From your life now?
3. Can you see any dangers in "blaming" individuals who live in inner-cities for their own problems, including crime? When you consider the broader social context that is implicated in the "choice" of crime, why might focusing exclusively on "bad individuals" seem to be a limited way of understanding the causes of crime in inner cities? That is, do communities matter in the causation of criminal behavior?
4. Let's say that you are attending an American Society of Criminology meeting, and Sampson and Wilson are giving an address on their theory of crime. After their talk, they ask if there are any questions. You rise and ask, "Well, in light of your theory, what three policies or interventions might be undertaken to help solve crime in inner-city neighborhoods?" What do you think their answer would be?

9. Collective Efficacy and Crime

Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls

Crime, including violent crime, is not evenly distributed in the United States. Some cities, for example, are safer than others and, within urban areas, some neighborhoods are safer than other neighborhoods. As we have seen in Part III of this book, Shaw and McKay and their intellectual descendants have confronted this daunting task of explaining why some places are more dangerous than other places.

One strategy for distinguishing communities with high and low crime rates has been to focus on structural characteristics. In general, this approach has involved listing conditions that might be undesirable—such as poverty, residential instability, and the prevalence of broken homes—and seeing if these factors might be related to high crime rates (see also, Pratt and Cullen, 2005). These "structural antecedents," as they are sometimes called, are important to identify. But they leave one question unanswered: In between the undesirable structural conditions and crime, what actually goes on to make people break the law at such a high rate?

Robert Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls set out to solve this mystery. They based their research on data from a remarkable longitudinal six-year survey recently concluded in Chicago, Illinois (called the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods). In their particular study, they relied on data collected in 1995 from 8,782 residents in 343 Chicago neighborhoods. This information allowed them to do two important things.

First, because the project actually surveyed individuals (as opposed to using census information), Sampson et al. could control for characteristics of people that might potentially account for crime in a neighborhood. For example, it could be argued that crime is higher in certain neighborhoods not because of some feature of the neighborhood, but because people who are prone to commit crime have moved into and now reside in the neighborhood. This is called a "compositional effect"; crime is high because individuals with criminal traits "compose" the area's population. Second, Sampson and his colleagues could take the answers that individuals in each neighborhood gave to questions and aggregate them (i.e., total them up and take the average for each neighborhood). In this way, they could create measures for each neighborhood on how the residents, as a group or collective, differed from one another. This would allow them to assess what is called the "contextual effect" of a community on crime. "Collective efficacy," the key concept of Sampson et al., was constructed in this way and is a contextual effect in their theory. The authors examined whether, beyond the compositional effects of individual traits, collective efficacy explained neighborhood differences in crime.

Excerpted with permission from Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science*, 227, 15 August 1997.

Originally, Sampson et al. identified two separate contextual factors—features of the neighborhood—that they believed would explain "what went on" between the structural conditions, which they called "concentrated disadvantage" and crime rates. Drawn from Sampson's earlier work (see, e.g., Sampson and Groves, 1989), one factor was "informal social control"or the willingness of neighbors to intervene if they saw wrongdoing going on. The second factor was "social cohesion and trust," or how closely people in an area were tied to and supported each other. When they undertook their empirical analysis, however, Sampson et al. discovered that informal social control and social cohesion and trust were highly intercorrelated. This finding meant that these two factors were not separate conditions but part of some broader underlying construct.

What might this construct be? Sampson and his colleagues then invented the idea of "collective efficacy." They hypothesized that when people in a neighborhood trusted and supported one another, they had a basis for binding together to control disorderly and criminal behavior. This did not mean that people went about fighting crime on a daily basis. Rather, collective efficacy implied that when distruptive conduct arose, the people in these neighborhoods had the cohesiveness to act in an "effective" way to solve the problem. Collective efficacy is thus a resource that is activated *in crucial situations (see also Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls, 1999; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).*

In contrast, when neighborhoods are racked by concentrated disadvantage (e.g., poverty, distrupted families), residential instability, and large populations of immigrants, the residents often are less able to forge close ties, to trust one another, and to exercise informal social control. Lacking collective efficacy, in short, causes disorder and crime to emerge and to spiral out of control. This is what Sampson et al. believed was occurring in Chicago neighborhoods with high crime rates.

Sampson et al. were able to show that spatial differences in collective efficacy—even controlling statistically for compositional effects—helped to account for neighborhood differences in crime rates. In doing so, they provided important evidence that collective efficacy might be the key community-level condition that lies in between structural factors and crime rates (see also Sampson, 2006).

Still, more theorizing and research needs to be done. Sampson et al. need to flesh out more clearly what they mean by collective efficacy: to define its components more systematically, to specify the conditions under which it is activated, and to describe what precisely happens when collective efficacy is exerted. Furthermore, the true explanatory power of collective efficacy will not be known until it squares off against competing theories (e.g., social disorganization, institutional-anomie, conflict) in an empirical test. It seems likely, however, that macro-level theorizing about crime rates will be influenced by the model of collective efficacy for some time to come.

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For most of this century, social scientists have observed marked variations in rates of criminal violence across neighborhoods of U.S. cities. Violence has been associated with the low socioeconomic status (SES) and residential instability of neighborhoods. Although the geographical concentration of violence and its connection with neighborhood composition are well established, the question remains: why? What is it, for example, about the concentration of poverty that accounts for its association with rates of violence? What are the social processes that might explain or mediate this relation? In this article, we report results from a study designed to address these questions about crime and communities.

Our basic premise is that social and organizational characteristics of neighborhoods explain variations in crime rates that are not solely attributable to the aggregated demographic characteristics of individuals. We propose that the differential ability of neighborhoods to realize the common values of residents and maintain effective social controls is a major source of neighborhood variation in violence. Although social control is often a response to deviant behavior, it should not be equated with formal regulation or forced conformity by institutions such as the police and courts. Rather, social control refers generally to the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles—to realize collective, as opposed to forced, goals. One central goal is the desire of community residents to live in safe and orderly environments that are free of predatory crime, especially interpersonal violence.

In contrast to formally or externally induced actions (for example, a police crackdown), we focus on the effectiveness of informal mechanisms by which residents themselves achieve public order. Examples of informal social control include the monitoring of spontaneous play groups among children, a willingness to intervene to prevents acts such as truancy and street corner "hanging" by teenage peer groups, and the confrontation of persons who are exploiting or disturbing public space. Even among adults, violence regularly arises in public disputes, in the context of illegal markets (for example, prostitution and drugs), and in the company of peers. The capacity of residents to control group-level processes and visible signs of social disorder is thus a key mechanism influencing opportunities for interpersonal crime in a neighborhood.

Informal social control also generalizes to broader issues of import to the well-being of neighborhoods. In particular, the differential ability of communities to extract resources and respond to cuts in public services (such as police patrols, fire stations, garbage collection, and housing code enforcement) looms large when we consider the known link between public signs of disorder (such as vacant housing, burned-out buildings, vandalism, and litter) and more serious crime.

Thus conceived, neighborhoods differentially activate informal social control. It is for this reason that we see an analogy between individual efficacy and neighborhood efficacy: both are activated processes that seek to achieve an intended effect. At the neighborhood level, however, the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good depends in large part on conditions of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbors. Indeed, one is unlikely to intervene in a neighborhood context in which the rules are unclear and people mistrust or fear one another. It follows that socially cohesive neighborhoods will prove the most fertile contexts for the realization of informal social control. In sum, it is the linkage of mutual trust and

the willingness to intervene for the common good that defines the neighborhood context of collective efficacy. Just as individuals vary in their capacity for efficacious action, so too do neighborhoods vary in their capacity to achieve common goals. And just as individual self-efficacy is situated rather than global (one has self-efficacy relative to a particular task or type of task), in this paper we view neighborhood efficacy as existing relative to the tasks of supervising children and maintaining public order. It follows that the collective efficacy of residents is a critical means by which urban neighborhoods inhibit the occurrence of personal violence, without regard to the demographic composition of the population.

What Influences Collective Efficacy?

As with individual efficacy, collective efficacy does not exist in a vacuum. It is embeded in structural contexts and a wider political economy that stratifies places of residence by key social characteristics. Consider the destabilizing potential of rapid population change on neighborhood social organization. A high rate of residential mobility, especially in areas of decreasing population, fosters institutional disruption and weakened social controls over collective life. A major reason is that the formation of social ties takes time. Financial investment also provides homeowners with a vested interest in supporting the commonweal of neighborhood life. We thus hypothesize that residential tenure and homeownership promote collective efforts to maintain social control.

Consider next patterns of resource distribution and racial segregation in the United States. Recent decades have witnessed an increasing geographical concentration of lower income residents, especially minority groups and female-headed families. This neighborhood concentration stems in part from macroeconomic changes related to the deindustrialization of central cities, along with the out-migration of middle-class residents. In addition, the greater the race and class segregation in a metropolitan area, the smaller the number of neighborhoods absorbing economic shocks and the more severe the resulting concentration of poverty will be. Economic stratification by race and place thus fuels the neighborhood concentration of cumulative forms of disadvantage, intensifying the social isolation of lower income, minority, and single-parent residents from key resources supporting collective social control.

Perhaps more salient is the influence of racial and economic exclusion on perceived powerlessness. Social science research has demonstrated, at the individual level, the direct role of SES in promoting a sense of control, efficacy, and even biological health itself. An analogous process may work at the community level. The alienation, exploitation, and dependency wrought by resource deprivation act as a centrifugal force that stymies collective efficacy. Even if personal ties are strong in areas of concentrated disadvantage, they may be weakly tethered to collective actions.

We therefore test the hypothesis that concentrated disadvantage decreases and residential stability increases collective efficacy. In turn, we assess whether collective efficacy explains the association of neighborhood disadvantage and residential instability with rates of interpersonal violence. It is our hypothesis that collective efficacy mediates a substantial portion of the effects of neighborhood stratification.

Research Design

This article examines data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago neighborhoods (PHDCN). Applying a spatial definition of neighborhood—a collection of people and institutions occupying a subsection of a larger community—we combined 847 census tracts in

the city of Chicago to creat 343 "neighborhood clusters" (NCs).

The overriding consideration in formation of NCs was that they should be as ecologically meaningful as possible, composed of geographically contiguous census tracts, and internally homogeneous on key census indicators. We settled on an ecological unit of about 8,000 people, which is smaller than the 77 established community areas in Chicago (the average size is almost 40,000 people) but large enough to approximate local neighborhoods. Geographic boundaries (for example, railroad tracks, parks, and freeways) and knowledge of Chicago's neighborhoods guided this process.

The extensive racial, ethnic, and social-class diversity of Chicago's population was a major criterion in its selection as a research site. At present, whites, blacks, and Latinos each represent about a third of the city's population. Although there are no low-SES white neighborhoods and no high-SES Latinos neighborhoods, there are black neighborhoods in all three cells of SES, and many heterogeneous neighborhoods vary in SES....

To gain a complete picture of the city's neighborhoods, 8,782 Chicago residents representing all 343 NCs were interviewed in their homes as part of the community survey (CS). The CS was designed to yield a representative sample of households within each NC, with sample sizes large enough to create reliable NC measures. Henceforth, we refer to NCs as "neighborhoods," keeping in mind that other operational definitions might have been used.

Measure of Collective Efficacy

"Informal social control" was represented by a five-item Likert-type scale. Residents were asked about the likelihood ("Would you say it is very likely, likely, neither likely nor unlikely, unlikely, or very unlikely?") that their neighbors could be counted on to intervene in various ways if (i) children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, (ii) children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building, (iii) children were showing disrespect to an adult, (iv) a fight broke out in front of their house, and (v) the fire station closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts. "Social cohesion and trust" were also represented by five conceptually related items. Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed (on a five-point scale) that "people around here are willing to help their neighbors," "this is a close-knit neighborhood," "people in this neighborhood generally don't get along with each other," and "people in this neighborhood do not share the same values" (the last two statements were reverse coded).

Responses to the five-point Likert scales were aggregated to the neighborhood level as initial measures. Social cohesion and informal social control were closely associated across neighborhoods ($r = 0.80, P < .001$), which suggests that the two measures were tapping aspects of the same latent construct. Because we also expected that the willingness and intention to intervene on behalf of the neighborhood would be enhanced under conditions of mutual trust and cohesion, we combined the two scales into a summary measure labeled collective efficacy....

Discussion and Implications

The results imply that collective efficacy is an important construct that can be measured reliably at the neighborhood level by means of survey research strategies. In the past, sample surveys have primarily considered individual-level relations. However, surveys that merge a cluster sample design with questions tapping collective properties lend themselves to the additional consideration of neighborhood phenomena.

Together, three dimensions of neighborhood stratification—concentrated disadvantage, immigration concentration, and residential stability—explained 70 percent of the neighborhood variation in collective efficacy. Collective efficacy in turn mediated a substantial portion of the association of residential stability and disadvantage with multiple measures of violence, which is

consistent with a major theme in neighborhood theories of social organization.

After adjustment for measurement error, individual differences in neighborhood composition, prior violence, and other potentially confounding social processes, the combined measure of informal social control and cohesion and trust remained a robust predictor of lower rates of violence.

There are, however, several limitations of the present study. Despite the use of decennial census data and prior crime as lagged predictors, the basic analysis was cross-sectional in design; causal effects were not proven. Indicators of informal control and social cohesion were not observed directly but rather inferred from informant reports. Beyond the scope of the present study, other dimensions of neighborhood efficacy (such as political ties) may be important, too. Our analysis was limited also to one city and did not go beyond its official boundaries into a wider region. Finally, the image of local residents working collectively to solve their own problems is not the whole picture. As shown, what happens within neighborhoods is in part shaped by socioeconomic and housing factors linked to the wider political economy. In addition to encouraging communities to mobilize against violence through "self-help" strategies of informal social control, perhaps reinforced by partnerships with agencies of formal social control (community policing), strategies to address the social and ecological changes that beset many inner-city communities need to be considered. Recognizing that collective efficacy matters does not imply that inequalities at the neighborhood level can be neglected.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the concept of collective efficacy differ from the concept of social disorganization?
2. Think back to when you were growing up. Was the level of collective efficacy high or low in your neighborhood? Can you give examples of when collective efficacy was or was not activated to deal with public disorder? How might collective efficacy apply to crime on college campuses, including residence halls?
3. Collective efficacy involves informal social control and mutual trust. Why do you think that these two social conditions are so closely related? Why would residents be more willing to help neighbors exercise informal social control if they trusted one another?
4. What are the policy implications of collective efficacy? What might Sampson and his colleagues say would be some key ways to increase collective efficacy and reduce crime rates in a community? Given their perspective, what type of policing or community corrections might Sampson et al. endorse?