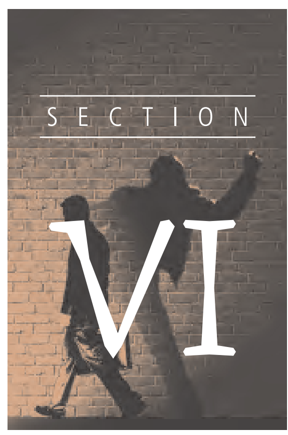


THE CHICAGO SCHOOL AND CULTURAL/ SUBCULTURAL THEORIES OF CRIME

The introduction to this section will examine the origin and evolution of the Chicago/Ecological School theory, otherwise known as the ecological perspective or the theory of social disorganization. We will also discuss modern research on this theory, which assumes that the environment people live in determines their behavior. Finally, the assumptions and dynamics of cultural/subcultural theory in society will be discussed, with an emphasis on differences in certain models emphasizing inner-city subcultures and other modern examples (e.g., street gangs). We will finish this section introduction by reviewing the policy implications that have been suggested by this perspective of crime.

Introduction

This section examines the Chicago School of criminology, which is otherwise known as the ecological perspective or theory of social disorganization, for reasons that will become very clear. The Chicago School evolved there because the city at that time (late 19th and early 20th centuries) desperately needed answers for its exponentially growing problem of delinquency and crime. Thus, this became a primary focus in the city of Chicago, where total chaos prevailed at the time.

A significant portion of the Chicago perspective involved the transmission of cultural values to other peers, and even across generations, as the older youths relayed their antisocial values and techniques to the younger children. Thus, the cultural/subcultural perspective is also a key area of this theoretical model. This cultural aspect of the Chicago model is also examined in this section, as well as other subculture frameworks of offending behaviors.

The School of Ecology and the Chicago School of Criminology

Despite its name specifying one city, the **Chicago School of criminology** represents one of the most valid and generalizable theories we will discuss in this book, in the sense that many of its propositions can be readily applied to the growth and evolution of virtually all cities around the world. The Chicago School, which is often referred to as the **Ecological School** or the theory of **social disorganization**, also represents one of the earliest examples of balancing theorizing with scientific analysis and at the same time guiding important programs and policy implementations that still thrive today. Perhaps most important, the Chicago School of criminology was the epitome of using theoretical development and scientific testing to help improve conditions in society when it was most needed, which can be appreciated only by understanding the degree of chaos and crime that existed in Chicago in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Cultural Context: Chicago in the 1800s and Early 1900s

Experts have determined that 19th-century Chicago was the fastest-growing city in U.S. history.[1] Census data show the population went from about 5,000 in the early 1800s to more than 2 million by 1900; put another way, the population more than doubled every decade during the 19th century.[2] This massive rate of growth—much faster than that seen in other large U.S. cities such as Boston, Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco—was due to Chicago's central geographic position. It was in many ways land-locked because although it sits on Lake Michigan, there was no water route to the city from the Atlantic Ocean until the Erie Canal opened in 1825, which provided access to the Great Lakes region for shipping and migration of people. Three years later came

[1]For an excellent discussion of the early history of Chicago, see Thomas J. Bernard, *The Cycle of Juvenile Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[2]See discussion in George B. Vold, Thomas J. Bernard, and Jeffrey B. Snipes, Theoretical Criminology, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117–22.

the first U.S. passenger train, the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, with a route from a mid-Atlantic city to central areas. These two transportation advancements created a continuous stream migration to the Chicago area, increased again when the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, linking both coasts with the U.S. Midwest.[3]

It is important to keep in mind that in the early to mid-1800s, many large U.S. cities had virtually no formal social agencies to handle problems of urbanization: No social workers, building inspectors, garbage collectors, or even police officers. Once police agencies were introduced, their duties often included finding lost children and collecting the garbage, primarily because there weren't other agencies to perform these tasks. Therefore, communities were largely responsible for solving their own problems, including crime and delinquency. By the late 1800s, however, Chicago was largely made up of citizens who did not speak a common language and did not share each other's cultural values. This phenomenon is consistent with Census Bureau data from that era, which shows that 70% of Chicago residents were foreign born and another 20% were first-generation Americans. Thus, it was almost impossible for these citizens to organize themselves to solve community problems because in most cases, they could not even understand each other.

This resulted in the type of chaos and normlessness that Durkheim predicted would occur when urbanization and industrialization occurred too rapidly; in fact, Chicago represented the archetypal example of a society in an anomic state, with almost a complete breakdown in control. One of the most notable manifestations of this breakdown in social control was that children were running wild on the streets in gangs, with adults making little attempt to intervene. So delinquency was soaring, and it appeared that the gangs controlled the streets as much as any other group.

The leaders and people of Chicago needed theoretical guidance to develop solutions to their problems, particularly regarding the high rates of delinquency. This was a key factor in why the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago became so important and dominant in the early 1900s. Essentially, modern sociology developed in Chicago because the city needed it the most to solve its social problems. Thus, Chicago became a type of laboratory for the sociological researchers, and they developed a number of theoretical models of crime and other social ills that are still shown to be empirically valid today.

Ecological Principles in City Growth and Concentric Circles

In the 1920s and 1930s, several new perspectives of human behavior and city growth were offered by sociologists at the University of Chicago. The first relevant model was proposed by Robert E. Park, who claimed that much of human behavior, especially the way cities grow, follow the basic principles of ecology that had been documented and applied to wildlife for many years at that point.[4] Ecology is essentially the study of the dynamics and processes through which plants and animals interact with the environment. In an application of Darwinian theory, Park proposed that the growth of cities follows a natural pattern and evolution.

---

[3]These dates were taken from *The World Almanac, 2000, Millennium Collector's Edition*, (Mahwah, NJ: Primedia Reference, 2000).

[4]Robert E. Park, "Human Ecology," *American Journal of Sociology* 42 (1936); Robert E. Park, *Human Communities* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952).

Specifically, Park claimed that cities represent a type of complex organism with a sense of unity composed of the interrelations among the citizens and groups in the city. Park applied the ecological principle of symbiosis to explain the dependency of various citizens and units on each other: Everyone is better off working together as a whole. Furthermore, Park claimed that all cities would contain identifiable clusters, which he called **natural areas**, where the cluster had taken on a life or organic unity by itself. To clarify, many cities have neighborhoods that are made up of primarily one ethnic group or are distinguished by certain features. For example, New York City's Hell's Kitchen, Times Square, and Harlem represent areas of one city that have each taken on a unique identity; however, each of them contributes to the whole makeup and identity of the city. The same can be seen in other cities, such as Baltimore, which in a two-mile area has the Inner Harbor, Little Italy, and Fell's Point, with each area complementing the other zones. From Miami to San Francisco to New Orleans, all cities across America, and throughout the world for that matter, contain these identifiable natural areas.

Applying several other ecological principles, Park also noted that some areas (or species) may invade and dominate adjacent areas (species). The dominated area or species can recede, migrate to another location, or die off. In wildlife, an example is the incredible proliferation of a weed called kudzu, which grows at an amazing pace and has very large leaves. It grows on top of other plants, trees, fields, and even houses, seeking to cover everything in its path and steal all of the sunlight needed by other plants. Introduced to the United States in the 1800s at a world exposition, this weed was originally used to stop erosion but got out of control, especially in the southeastern region of the United States. Now the weed costs the government more than $350 million each year in destruction of crops and other flora. This is a good example of a species that invades, dominates, and causes the recession of other species in the area.

A similar example can be found in the introduction of bison on Santa Catalina Island off the Southern California coast in the 1930s. About three dozen buffalo were originally imported to the island for a movie shoot, and the producers decided not to spend the money to remove them after the shoot, so they have remained and multiplied. Had this have occurred in many parts of the United States, it would not have caused a problem. However, the largest mammal native to the island before the bison was a four-pound fox. So the buffalo—now numbering in the hundreds, to the point where several hundred were recently shipped to their native western habitat—have destroyed much of the environment, driving to extinction some plants and animals unique to Catalina Island. Like the kudzu, the bison came to dominate the environment; in this case, other species couldn't move off the island and died off.

Park claimed that a similar process occurs in human cities as some areas invade other zones or areas, and the previously dominant area must relocate or die off. This is easy to see in modern times with the growth of what is known as *urban sprawl*. Geographers and urban planners have long acknowledged the detriment to traditionally stable residential areas when businesses move into an area. Some of the most recent examples involve the battles between long-time homeowners against the introduction of malls, businesses, and other industrial centers in a previously zoned residential district. The media have documented such fights, especially with the proliferation of such establishments as Wal-Mart or Super K-Marts, which residents perceive, and perhaps rightfully so, as an invasion. Such an invasion can create chaos in a previously stable residential community due to increased traffic, transient population, and perhaps most important, crime. Furthermore, some cities

are granting power to such development through eminent domain, in which the local government can take land from the homeowners to rezone and import businesses.

When Park developed his theory of ecology, he observed the trend of businesses and factories invading the traditionally residential areas of Chicago, which caused major chaos and breakdown in stability in those areas. Readers, especially those who were raised in suburban or rural areas, can likely relate to this; going back to where they grew up, they can often see fast growth. Such development can devastate the informal controls such as neighborhood networks or family ties, etc.) as a result of invasion by a highly transient group of consumers and residents who do not have strong ties to the area.

This leads to a psychological indifference toward the neighborhood, in which no one cares about protecting the community any longer. Those who can afford to leave the area do, and those who can't afford to get out remain until they can save enough money to do so. When Park presented his theory of ecology in the 1920s, factories moving into the neighborhood often meant having a lot of smoke billowing out of chimneys. No one wanted to live in such a place, particularly at a time when the effects of pollution were not understood and such smoke stacks had no filters. Certain parts of Chicago and other U.S. cities were perpetually covered by smog these factories created. In highly industrial areas, the constant and vast coverage of smoke and pollutants made it seem to be snowing or overcast most of the time. It is easy to see how such invasions can completely disrupt the previously dominant and stable residential areas of a community.

Park's ideas became even more valid and influential with the complementary perspective offered by Ernest W. Burgess.[5] He proposed a theory of city growth in which cities were seen as growing not simply on the edges but from the inside outward. It is easy to observe cities growing on the edges, as in the example of urban sprawl, but Burgess claimed that the source of the growth was in the center of the city. Growth of the inner city puts pressure on adjacent zones, which in turn begin to grow into the next adjacent zones, following the ecological principle of "succession" identified by Park. This type of development is referred to as radial growth, meaning beginning on the inside and rippling outward.[6]

An example of this can be seen by watching a drop of water fall into the center of a bucket filled with water. The waves from the impact will form circles that ripple outward. This is exactly how Burgess claimed that cities grow. Although the growth of cities is most visible on the edges, largely due to development of business and homes where only trees or barren land existed before, the reason for growth on the edges is due to pressure forming from the very heart of the city. Another good analogy is the "domino effect," because pressure from the center leads to pressure to grow on the next zone, which leads to pressure on the adjacent zones, and so forth.

Burgess also specified the primary zones—five pseudo-distinctive natural areas in a constant state of flux due to growth—that all cities appear to have. He depicted these zones as a set of concentric circles. The first innermost circle was called Zone I, or the central business district due to cost. This area of a city contains the large business buildings, modern skyscrapers that are home to banking, chambers of commerce, courthouse, and other essential business/political centers such as police headquarters, post office, and so on.

---

[5]Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City," in *The City*, ed. Robert Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928).

[6]See Vold et al., *Theoretical Criminology*, 118–21.

Just outside the business district is the unnumbered "factory zone." It is perhaps the most significant in terms of causing crime because it invaded the previously stable residential zones in Zone II, which was identified as the **zone in transition**. Zone II is appropriately named because it was truly in a state of transition from residential to industrial, primarily because this was the area of the city in which business and factories were invading residential areas. Zone II was the area that was most significantly subjected to the ecological principles Park suggested: invasion, domination, recession, and succession. Subsequent criminological theorists focused on this zone.

According to Burgess's theory of concentric circles, Zone III was the "workingmen's homes," relatively modest houses and apartment buildings; Zone IV consisted of higher-priced family dwellings and more expensive apartments, and Zone V was the suburban or commuter zone. These outer three zones Burgess identified were of less importance in terms of crime, primarily because as a general rule, the further a family could move out of the city the better the neighborhood was in terms of social organization and the lower the rate of social ills (e.g., poverty, delinquency). The important point of this theory of concentric circles is that the growth of each inner zone puts pressure on the next zone to grow and push into the next adjacent zone.

It is easy for readers to see examples of **concentric circles theory**. Wherever you live in the United States, any major city provides real-life evidence of the validity of this perspective. For example, whether people drive on Interstate 95 through Baltimore or Interstate 5 through Los Angeles, they will see the same pattern of city structure. As they approaches each of the cities, they see suburban wealth in the homes and buildings, often hidden by trees off the highway. Closer to the cities, they see homes and buildings deteriorate in terms of value. Because parts of the highway systems near Baltimore and Los Angeles are somewhat elevated above the ground, drivers entering Zone II can easily see the prevalence of factories and the highly deteriorated nature of the areas. Today, many 20th-century factories have been abandoned or are limited in use; these factory zones consist of rusted-out or demolished buildings. Zone II is also often the location of subsidized or public housing. Only the people who can't afford to live anywhere else are forced to live in these neighborhoods. Finally, as drivers enter the inner city of skyscrapers, the conditions improve dramatically because the major businesses have invested their money here. Compared to Zone II, this innermost area is a utopia.

This theory applies around the world, and we challenge readers to find any major city throughout the world that did not develop this way. Nowadays, some attempts have been made to plan their community development, and others have experienced the convergence of several patterns of concentric circles as central business districts (i.e., Zone Is) are developed in what was previously suburb (i.e., Zone Vs). However, for the most part, the theoretical framework of concentric circles still has a great deal of support. In fact, even cities found in Eastern cultures have evolved this way. Therefore, Park's application appears to be correct: Cities grow in a natural way across time and place, abiding by the natural principles of ecology.

Shaw and McKay's Theory of Social Disorganization

Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay drew heavily on their colleagues at the University of Chicago in devising their theory of social disorganization, which became known as the

Chicago School theory of criminology.[7] Shaw had been producing excellent case studies for years on the individual (i.e., micro) level before he took on theorizing on the macro (i.e., structural) level of crime rates.[8] However, once he began working with McKay, he devised perhaps the most enduring and valid model of why certain neighborhoods have more social problems, such as delinquency, than others.

In this model, Shaw and McKay proposed a framework that began with the assumption that certain neighborhoods in all cities have more crime than other parts of the city, most of them located in Burgess's Zone II, which is the zone in the transition from residential to industrial, due to the invasion of factories. According to Shaw and McKay, the neighborhoods that have the highest rates of crime typically have at least three common problems (see Figure 6.1): physical dilapidation, poverty, and heterogeneity (which is a fancy way of saying a high cultural mix). There were other common characteristics to these neighborhoods that Shaw and McKay noted, such as a highly transient population, meaning that people constantly move in and out of the area, as well as unemployment among the residents of the neighborhood.

As noted in Figure 6.1, other social ills are included as antecedent factors in the theoretical model. The antecedent social ills tend to lead to a breakdown in social organization, which is why this model is referred to as the theory of social disorganization. Specifically, it is predicted that the antecedent factors of poverty, heterogeneity, and physical dilapidation lead to a state of social disorganization, which in turn leads to crime and delinquency. This means that the residents of a neighborhood that fits the profile of having a high rate of poor, culturally mixed residents in a dilapidated area cannot come together to solve problems, such as delinquency among youth.

One of the most significant contributions of Shaw and McKay was that they demonstrated that the prevalence and frequency of various social ills—such as poverty, disease, and low birth weight—tend to overlap with higher delinquency rates. Regardless of what social problem is measured, higher rates are almost always clustered in the zone in transition. Shaw and McKay believed there was a breakdown of informal social controls in these areas and that children began to learn offending norms from their interactions with peers on the street, through what they called "play activities."[9] Thus, the breakdown in the conditions of the neighborhood leads to social disorganization, which in turn leads to delinquents learning criminal activities from older youth in the neighborhood. Ultimately, the failure of the neighborhood residents to organize themselves allows the older youth to govern the behavior of the younger children. Basically, the older youth in the area provide a system of organization where the neighborhood cannot, so younger children follow them.

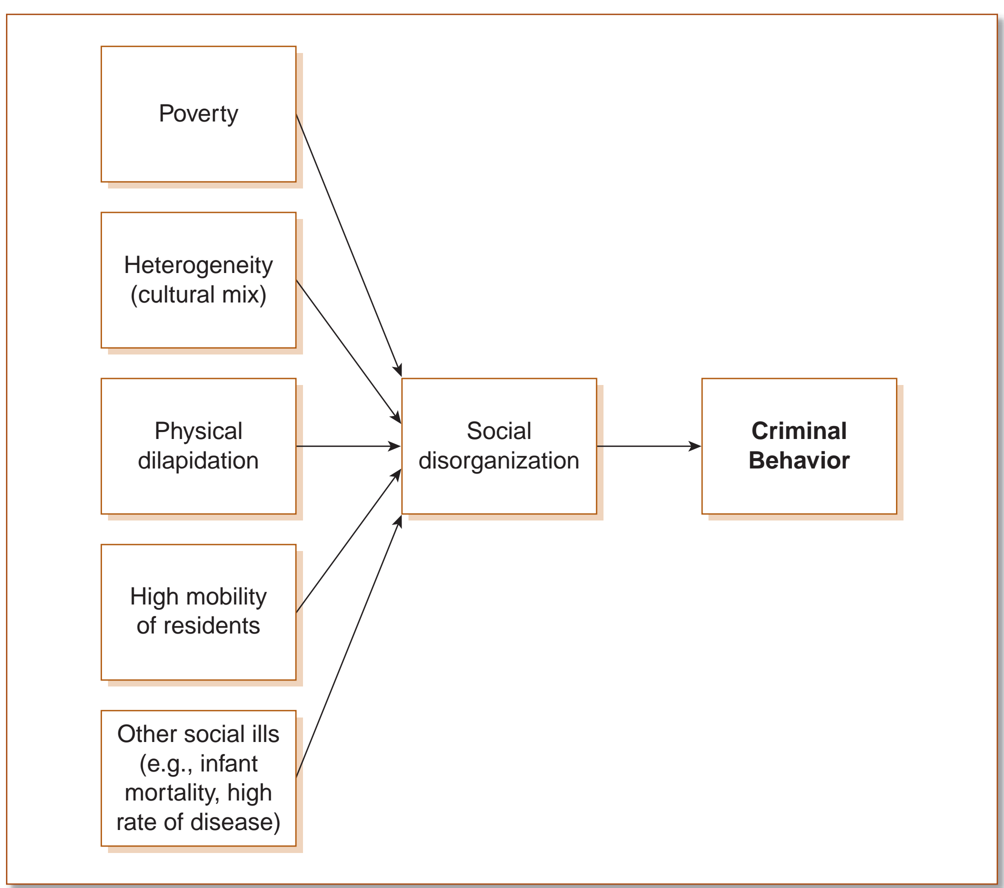
---

[7]Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas,* Rev. ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

[8]Clifford Shaw, *Brothers in Crime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938); Clifford Shaw, *The Jackroller* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Clifford Shaw, *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931).

[9]Shaw, *Brothers in Crime*, 354–55.

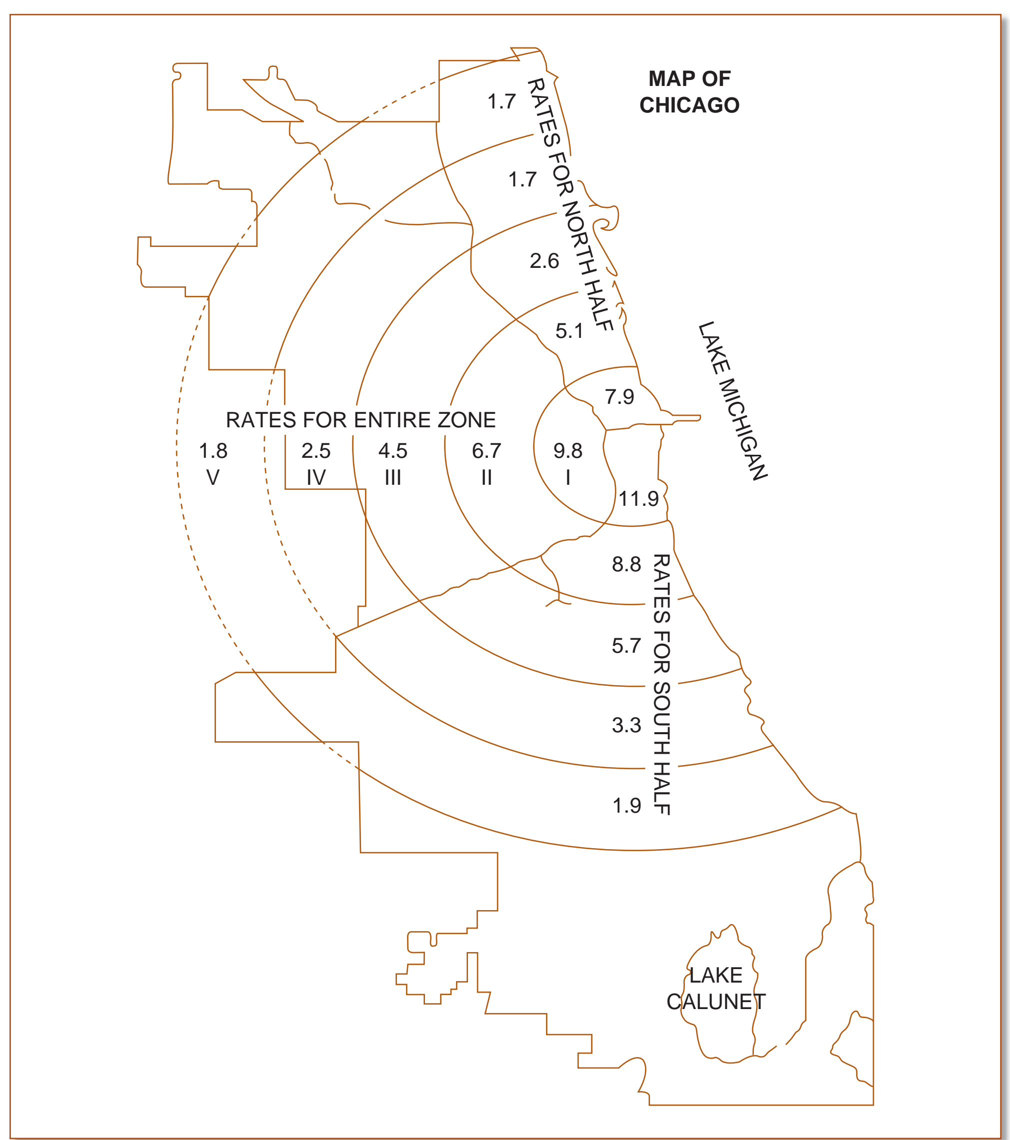
Figure 6.1 Model of Shaw and McKay's Theory of Social Disorganization



One of the best things about Shaw and McKay's theoretical model is that the researchers support their propositions with data from the U.S. census and city records showing that neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and physical dilapidation and high cultural mix also had the highest rates of delinquency and crime. Furthermore, the high rates of delinquency and other social problems were consistent with Burgess's framework of concentric circles, in that the highest rates were observed for the areas that were in Zone II, the zone in transition. There was an exception to the model: The Gold Coast area along the northern coast of Lake Michigan was notably absent from the high rates of social problems, particularly delinquency, even though it was geographically in Zone II according to the otherwise consistent model of concentric circles and neighborhood zones.

So the findings of Shaw and McKay were as predicted in the sense that high delinquency rates occurred in areas where factories were invading the residential district. Furthermore, Shaw and McKay's longitudinal data showed that it did not matter which

Figure 6.2 Zone Map of Male Delinquents in Chicago 1925–1933



ethnic groups lived in Zone II (zone in transition); all groups (with the exception of Asians) that lived in that zone had high delinquency rates during their residency. On the other hand, once most of an ethnic group had moved out of Zone II, the delinquency rate among its youth decreased significantly.

This finding rejects the notion of **social Darwinism** because it is clearly not the culture that influences crime and delinquency but rather the criminogenic nature of the

environment. If ethnicity or race made a difference, the delinquency rates in Zone II would fluctuate based on who lived there, but the rates continued to be high from one group to the next. Rather, the zone determined the rates of delinquency.

Reaction and Research on Social Disorganization Theory

Over the last few decades, the Chicago School theoretical framework has received an enormous amount of attention from researchers.[10] Virtually all of the research has supported Shaw and McKay's version of social disorganization and the resulting high crime rates in neighborhoods that exhibit such deprived conditions. Modern research has supported the theoretical model proposed by Shaw and McKay, specifically in terms of the high crime rates in disorganized neighborhoods. Also, virtually every city that has an elevated highway (such as Richmond, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; Los Angeles, California), visually supports Shaw and McKay's model of crime in concentric circles. Drivers entering those cities can see the pattern of dilapidated structures in the zone of transition surrounding the inner-city area. Before and after this layer of dilapidated structures, drivers encounter a layer of houses and residential areas that seem to increase in quality as the driver gets further away from the inner-city area.

Some critics, however, have raised some valid concerns regarding the original model, arguing that Shaw and McKay's original research did not actually measure their primary construct: social disorganization. Although this criticism is accurate, recent research has shown that the model is valid even when valid measures of social disorganization are included in the model.[11] Such measures of social disorganization include simply asking members of the neighborhood how many neighbors they know by name or how often they observe unsupervised peer groups in the area.

Additional criticisms of Shaw and McKay's formulation of social disorganization focus on the emphasis that the theory places on the macro, or aggregate, level of analysis. Although their theory does a good job of predicting which neighborhoods have higher crime rates, the model does not even attempt to explain why most youths in the worst areas do not become offenders. Furthermore, their model does not attempt to explain why some youths—although a very small number—in the best neighborhoods (in Zone V) choose to commit crime. However, the previous case

[10]John Laub, "Urbanism, Race, and Crime," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 20 (1983): 283–98; Robert Sampson, "Structural Sources of Variation in Race-Age-Specific Rate of Offending Across Major U.S. Cities," *Criminology* 23 (1985): 647–73; J. L. Heitgard and Robert J. Bursik, "Extracommunity Dynamics and the Ecology of Delinquency," *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1987): 775–87; Robert Bursik, "Social Disorganization and Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Problems and Prospects," *Criminology* 26 (1988): 519–51; Ralph Taylor and Jeanette Covington, "Neighborhood Changes in Ecology and Violence," *Criminology* 26 (1988): 553–89; Robert Bursik, "Ecological Stability and the Dynamics of Delinquency," in *Crime and Community,* ed. Albert J. Reiss and Morris H. Tonry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 35–66; Robert Sampson, "Transcending Tradition: New Directions in Community Research, Chicago Style—The American Society of Criminology 2001 Sutherland Address," *Criminology* 40 (2002): 213–30; Robert Sampson, J. D. Morenoff, and T. Gannon-Rowley, "Assessing 'Neighborhood Effects': Social Processes and New Directions in Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 443–78; P. O. Wikstrom and Rolf Loeber, "Do Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Cause Well-Adjusted Children to Become Adolescent Delinquents?" *Criminology* 38 (2000): 1109–42.

[11]Robert Sampson and W. Byron Groves, "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social Disorganization Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1989): 774–802.

studies completed and published by Clifford Shaw attempted to address the individual (micro) level of offending.

Also, there was one notable exception to Shaw and McKay's proposition that all ethnic/racial groups have high rates of delinquency/crime while they live in Zone II. Evidence showed that when Japanese made up a large portion of residents in this zone in transition, they had very low rates of delinquency. Thus, as in most theoretical models in social science, there was an exception to the rule.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of Shaw and McKay's theory, one that has yet to be adequately addressed, deals with their blatant neglect in proposing ways to ameliorate the most problematic source of criminality in the Zone II, transitional zone neighborhoods. Although they clearly point to the invasion of factories and businesses into residential areas as a problem, they do not recommend how to slow such invasion. This is likely due to political and financial concerns: The owners of the factories and businesses partially financed their research and later funded their primary policy implementation. Furthermore, this neglect is represented in their failure to explain the exception of the Gold Coast in their results and conclusions.

Despite the criticisms and weaknesses of the Chicago School perspective of criminology, this theory resulted in one of the largest programs to date in attempting to reduce delinquency rates. Clifford Shaw was put in charge of establishing the Chicago Area Project (CAP), which created neighborhood centers in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods of Chicago. These centers offered activities for youth and tried to establish ties between parents and officials in the neighborhood. Although this program was never scientifically evaluated, it still exists, and many cities have implemented programs that are based on this model. For example, Boston implemented a very similar program, which was evaluated by Walter Miller.[12] This evaluation showed that although the project was effective in establishing relationships and interactions between local gangs and community groups and in providing more educational and vocational opportunities, it seemed to fail in reducing delinquent/criminal behavior. Thus, the overall conclusion made by experts was that the Boston project and other similar programs, like the CAP, typically fail to prevent criminal behavior.[13]

Cultural and Subcultural Theories of Crime

Cultural/subcultural theories of crime assume that there are unique groups in society that socialize their children to believe that certain activities that violate conventional law are good and positive ways to behave. Although it is rather difficult to find large groups of people or classes that fit this definition, it may be that some subcultures or isolated groups of individuals buy into a different set of norms than the conventional, middle-class set of values.

---

[12]Walter B. Miller, "The Impact of a 'Total-Community' Delinquency Control Project," *Social Problems* 10 (1962): 168–91.

[13]For a review, see Richard Lundman, *Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Also see review by Vold et al., *Theoretical Criminology*, 125–26.

Early Theoretical Developments and Research in Cultural/Subcultural Theory

One of the key developments of cultural theory is the 1967 work of Ferracuti and Wolfgang, who examined the violent themes of a group of inner-city youth from Philadelphia.[14] Ferracuti and Wolfgang's primary conclusion was that violence is a culturally learned adaptation to deal with negative life circumstances and that learning such norms occurs in an environment that emphasizes violence over other options.[15] These researchers based their conclusion on an analysis of data that showed great differences in rates of homicide across racial groups. However, Ferracuti and Wolfgang were clear that their theory was based on subcultural norms. Specifically, they proposed that no subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society of which it is a part.[16] This brings the distinction of culture and subculture to a forefront.

A culture represents a distinct set of norms and values among an identifiable group of people, values that are summarily different from those of the mainstream culture. For example, communism is distinctly different from capitalism because it emphasizes equality over competition, and it values utopia (i.e., everyone gets to share all profits) over the idea that the best performer gets the most reward. So it can be said that communists tend to have a different culture than capitalists. There is also a substantial difference between a culture and a subculture, which is typically only a pocket of individuals who may have a set of norms that deviate from conventional values. Therefore, what Ferracuti and Wolfgang developed is not so much a cultural theory as much as a subcultural theory.

This is also seen in the most prominent (sub)culture theory, which was presented by Walter Miller.[17] Miller's theoretical model proposed that the entire lower class had its own cultural value system. In this model, virtually everyone in the lower class believed in and socialized the values of six **focal concerns**: fate, autonomy, trouble, toughness, excitement, and smartness. Fate means luck, or whatever life dealt you; it disregards responsibility and accountability for one's actions. Autonomy is the value of independence from authority. Trouble means staying out of legal problems, as well as getting into and out of personal difficulties (e.g., pregnancy). Toughness is maintaining your reputation on the street in many ways. Excitement is the engagement in activities, some illegal, that help liven up an otherwise mundane existence of being lower class. Smartness puts an emphasis on "street smarts" or the ability to con others. Miller thought that members of the lower class taught these six focal concerns as a culture or environment (or "milieu," as stated in the title of his work).

A more recent subculture model, proposed by Elijah Anderson, has received a lot of attention in the past few years.[18] This theory focuses on African Americans; because of the very deprived conditions in the inner cities, Black Americans feel a sense of hopelessness, isolation, and despair, Anderson asserts. He clearly notes that although many African

---

[14]Vold et al., *Theoretical Criminology*, 165–69; Frank Schmalleger, *Criminology Today,* 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006).

[15]Franco Ferracuti and Marvin Wolfgang, *The Subculture of Violence: Toward an Integrated Theory of Criminology* (London: Tavistock, 1967).

[16]As quoted from Schmalleger, *Criminology Today*, 230–31.

[17]Walter B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," *Journal of Social Issues* 14 (1958): 5–19.

[18]Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Streets* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

Americans believe in middle-class values, these values have no weight on the street, particularly among young urban males. According to Anderson, *The Code of the Streets*, which was the appropriate title of his book, is to maintain one's reputation and demand respect. For example, to be disrespected ("dissed") is considered grounds for a physical attack. Masculinity and control of one's immediate environment are treasured characteristics; this is perceived as the only thing people can control, given the harsh conditions in which they live (e.g., unemployment, poverty, etc.).

Criticisms of Cultural Theories of Crime

Studies on cultural theories of crime, at least in the United States, find no large groups that blatantly deny the middle-class norms of society. Miller's model of lower-class focal concerns is not consistent across the entire lower class. Studies show that most adults in the lower-class attempt to socialize their children to believe in conventional values, such as respect for authority, hard work, and delayed gratification, and not the focal concerns that Miller specified in his model.[19] Ferracuti and Wolfgang admitted that their research findings led them to conclude that their model was more of a subcultural perspective and a distinctly different culture. There may be small groups or gangs that have subcultural normative values, but that doesn't constitute a completely separate culture in society. Perhaps the best subculture theories are those presented by Cohen or Cloward and Ohlin (see Section V), in their variations of strain theory that emphasize the formations of gangs among lower-class male youth. If there are subcultural groups in U.S. society, they seem to make up a very small percentage of the population, which somewhat negates the cultural/subcultural perspective of criminality. But this type of perspective may be important regarding the criminality of some youth offenders.

Policy Implications

Many of the policy implications that are suggested by the theoretical models proposed in this chapter are rather ironic. Regarding social disorganization, there is a paradox that exists, in the sense that the very neighborhoods most desperately in need of becoming organized to fight crime are the same inner-city ghetto areas where it is, by far, most difficult to cultivate such organization (e.g., neighborhood watch or "Block Watch" groups). Rather, the neighborhoods that have high levels of organization tend to be those that already have very low levels of crime because the residents naturally "police" their neighbors' well-being and property; they have a stake in the area remaining crime-free. Although there are some anecdotal examples of success of neighborhood watch programs in high-crime neighborhoods, most of the empirical evidence shows that this approach is "almost uniformly unsupportive" in its ability to reduce crime in such neighborhoods.[20] Furthermore, many studies of these neighborhood watch programs actually find that the groups actually increase the fear of crime in a number of neighborhoods, perhaps due to the heightened awareness regarding the crime issues in such areas.[21]

[19]Vold et al., *Theoretical Criminology.*

[20]John Worrall, *Crime Control in America: An Assessment of the Evidence* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2006), 95.

[21]Ibid.

Perhaps the most notable program that resulted from the Chicago School/social disorganization model—the Chicago Area Project (CAP), and similar programs—have been dubbed failures in reducing crime rates among the participants. Still, there have been some advances in trying to get residents of high-crime areas to become organized in fighting crime. The more specific the goals regarding crime reduction—such as more careful monitoring of high-level offenders (such as more intensive supervised probation) or better lighting in dark places—the more effective the implementation will be.[22]

Regarding cultural/subcultural programs, some promising intervention and outreach programs that have been suggested by such models. Many programs attempt to build pro-social attitudes among high-risk youth, often young children. For example, a recent evaluation showed that a program called *Peace Builders*, which focuses on children in early grades, was effective in producing gains in conflict resolution, development of pro-social values, and reductions in aggression; a follow-up showed that these attributes were maintained for a long period of time.[23] Another recent anti-aggression training program for foster-home boys showed positive effects in levels of empathy, self-efficacy, and attribution style among boys who had exhibited early-onset aggression.[24] Ultimately, there are effective programs out there that promote pro-social norms and culture. More efforts should be given to promoting such programs that will help negate the anti-social cultural norms of individuals, especially among high-risk youth.

Conclusion

In this section, we examined theoretical perspectives proposing that the lack of social organization in broken down and dilapidated neighborhoods is unable to contain delinquency and crime. Furthermore, we discussed how this model of crime was linked to processes derived from ecological principles. This type of approach has been tested numerous times, and virtually all studies show that the distribution of delinquents/crime activity is consistent with this model.

We then discussed the ability of cultural and subcultural theories to explain criminal activity. Empirical evidence shows that cultural values make a contribution to criminal behavior, but that the existence of an actual alternative culture in our society has not been found. However, some subcultural pockets, particularly regarding inner-city youth gangs, certainly exist and provide some validity for this perspective of crime. Furthermore, the Chicago School perspective plays a role because these subcultural groups tend to be found in zones of transition.

Finally, we examined some policy implications that are suggested by these theoretical models. Regarding social disorganization, we noted that neighborhood crime-fighting

[22]Lundman, *Prevention and Control*; Sampson and Groves, "Community Structure"; Vold et al., *Theoretical Criminology*.

[23]D . J. Flannery, M. I. Singer, and K. L. Wester, "Violence, Coping, and Mental Health in a Community Sample of Adolescence," *Violence and Victims* 18 (2003): 403–18; For a review of this research, see Stephen G. Tibbetts, "Perinatal and Developmental Determinants of Early Onset of Offending: A Biosocial Approach for Explaining the Two Peaks of Early Antisocial Behavior," in *The Development of Persistent Criminality,* ed. J. Savage (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179–201.

[24]K. Weichold, "Evaluation of an Anti-aggressiveness Training with Antisocial Youth," *Gruppendynamik* 35 (2004): 83105; for a review, see Tibbetts, "Perinatal and Developmental."

groups are hardest to establish in high-crime neighborhoods and easiest to build in those neighborhoods with an already low rate of crime. Nevertheless, there have been some successes. We also looked at intervention and outreach programs based on the cultural and subcultural perspectives.

Section Summary

- We examined how principles of ecology were applied to the study of how cities grow, as well as to the study of crime, by researchers at University of Chicago, which became known as the Chicago (or Ecological) School of criminology.
- We reviewed the various zones of concentric circles theory, also a key contribution of the Chicago School of criminology, and explored which zones are most crime prone.
- We examined why the findings from the Chicago School of criminology showed that social Darwinism was not accurate in attributing varying crime rates to ethnicity or race.
- We reviewed much of the empirical evidence regarding the theory of social disorganization and examined the strengths and weaknesses of this theoretical model.
- We discussed the cultural/subcultural model presented by Ferracuti and Wolfgang, as well as the cultural model of inner-city urban youth presented by Anderson.
- We discussed Miller's theory of lower-class culture, particularly its six focal concerns.
- We reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of cultural and subcultural theories of crime, based on empirical evidence.

KEY TERMS

Chicago School of criminology

Concentric circles theory

Cultural/subcultural theories

Ecological School/perspective

Focal concerns

Natural areas

Social Darwinism

Social disorganization

Zone in transition

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify and discuss an example of the ecological principles of invasion, domination, and succession among animals or plants that was not discussed in this introduction.

2. Can you see examples of the various zones that Shaw and McKay described in the town/city where you live (or the one nearest you)? Try obtaining a map or sketching a plot of this city or town, and then draw the various concentric circles where you think the zones are located.

3. What forms of organization and disorganization have you observed in your own neighborhood? Try to supply examples of both, if possible.

4. Can you provide modern-day examples of different cultures/subcultures in the United States? What regions, or parts of the country, would you say have different cultures that are more conducive to crime?
5. Do you know people who believe most or all of Miller's focal concerns? What is their social class? What are their other demographic features (age, gender, urban/rural, etc.)?
6. Do you know individuals who seem to fit either Ferracuti and Wolfgang's cultural theory or Anderson's model of inner-city youth's street code? Why do you believe they fit such a model?

WEB RESOURCES

Chicago School of Criminology

http://www.helium.com/items/865770-an-overview-of-the-chicago-school-theories-of-criminology

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/771561/an_overview_of_the_chicago_school_theories.html

Subcultural Theories

http://www.umsl.edu/~keelr/200/subcult.html

READING

In this selection, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay present a theoretical model of various characteristics of neighborhoods that contribute to higher crime and delinquency rates. Specifically, they examine physical, economic, and population factors that contribute to higher rates of delinquency in certain communities. Such observations of certain neighborhoods provide the basis for the theory of social disorganization (also known as the Chicago or Ecological School of criminology). While reading this selection, readers are encouraged to think about the places they have lived or visited that fit these characteristics; it is likely such neighborhoods have high crime rates. Because this theory fits virtually all cities around the world, and because of their methodology, Shaw and McKay are generally considered two of the most prominent criminologists of the 20th century.

Source: Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 140–63. Copyright © 1969 University of Chicago Press. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

Delinquency Rates and Community Characteristics

Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay

The question has been asked many times: "What is it, in modern city life that produces delinquency?" Why do relatively large numbers of boys from the inner urban areas appear in court with such striking regularity, year after year, regardless of changing population structure or the ups and downs of the business cycle? [Elsewhere] a different series of male delinquents were presented which closely parallel one another in geographical distribution although widely separated in time, and the close resemblance of all these series to the distribution of truants and of adult criminals was shown. Moreover, many other community characteristics—median rentals, families on relief, infant mortality rates, and so on—reveal similar patterns of variation throughout the city. The next step would be to determine, if possible, the extent to which these two sets of data are related. How consistently do they vary together, if at all, and how high is the degree of association?

Where high zero-order correlations are found to exist uniformly between two variables, with a small probable error, it is possible and valid to consider either series as an approximate index, or indicator, of the other. This holds true for any two variables which are known to be associated or to vary concomitantly. The relationship, of course, may be either direct or inverse. In neither case, however, is there justification in assuming, on this basis alone, that the observed association is of a cause-and-effect nature; it may be, rather, that both variables are similarly affected by some third factor. Further analysis is needed. Controlled experimentation is often useful in establishing the degree to which a change in one variable "causes" or brings about a corresponding change in the other. In the social field, however, experimentation is difficult. Instead, it is often necessary to rely upon refined statistical techniques, such as partial correlation, which, for certain types of data, enable the investigator to measure the effects of one factor while holding others relatively constant. By the method of successive redistribution, also, the influence of one or more variables may be held constant. Thus, it is possible to study the relationship between rates of delinquents and economic status for a single nationality group throughout the city or for various nationality groups in the same area or class of areas. This process may be extended indefinitely, subject only to the limitations of the available data. In the analysis to be presented, both of the latter methods have been used in an attempt to determine how much weight should be given to various more or less influential factors.

Several practical considerations prevent the neat and precise statistical analysis which would be desirable. The characteristics studied represent only a sampling of the myriad forms in which community life and social relationships find expression. The rate of delinquents must itself be thought of as an imperfect enumeration of the delinquents and an index of the larger number of boys engaging in officially proscribed activities. Not only will there be chance fluctuations in the amount of alleged delinquency from year to year, but the policy of the local police officer in referring boys to the Juvenile Court, the focusing of the public eye upon conditions in an area, and numerous other matters may bring about a change in the index without any essential change in the underlying delinquency-producing influences in the community or in the behavior

resulting therefrom. If the infant mortality rates or the rates of families on relief are looked upon as indexes of economic status or of the social organization of a community, it is obvious that they can be considered only very crude indicators at best. The perturbing influence of other variables must always be considered.

Certain exceptional conditions are known to limit the value of other variables chosen as indicators of local community differentiation. Median rental has been used widely because of its popularity as an index of economic status, although in Chicago such an index is far from satisfactory when applied to areas of colored population. The Negro is forced to pay considerably higher rents than the whites for comparable housing—thus his economic level is made to appear higher on the basis of rental than it actually is. Similarly, rates of increase or decrease of population are modified in Negro areas by restrictions on free movement placed upon the Negro population. Thus, in certain areas the population is increasing where it normally would be expected to decrease if there were no such barriers. Likewise, the percentage of families owning homes is not entirely satisfactory as an economic index in large urban centers, where many of the well-to-do rent expensive apartments. It is, however, an indication of the relative stability of population in an area.

Correlation of series of rates based on geographical areas is further complicated by the fact that magnitude of the coefficient is influenced by the size of the area selected. This tendency has been noted by several writers, but no satisfactory solution of the problem has been offered. If it be borne in mind that a correlation of area data is an index of geographical association for a particular type of spatial division only, rather than a fixed measure of functional relationship, it will be apparent that a change in area size changes the meaning of the correlation. Thus, an r of .90 or above for two series of rates calculated by square-mile areas indicates a high degree of association between the magnitudes of the two rates in most of the square miles but does not tell us the exact degree of covariance for smaller or larger areas.

With these limitations clearly in mind, a number of correlation coefficients and tables of covariance are presented. The statistical data characterizing and differentiating local urban areas may be grouped under three headings: (1) physical status, (2) economic status, and (3) population composition. These will be considered, in turn, in relation to rates of delinquents.

Indexes of Physical Status in Relation to Rates of Delinquents

The location of major industrial and commercial developments, the distribution of buildings condemned for demolition or repair, and the percentage increase or decrease in population by square-mile areas were presented [elsewhere] as indications of the physical differentiation of areas within the city. Quantitative measures of the first two are not available, but inspection of the distribution maps shows clearly that the highest rates of delinquents are most frequently found in, or adjacent to, areas of heavy industry and commerce. These same neighborhoods have the largest number of condemned buildings. The only notable exception to this generalization, for Chicago, appears in some of the areas south of the central business district.

There is, of course, little reason to postulate a direct relationship between living in proximity to industrial developments and becoming delinquent. While railroads and industrial properties may offer a field for delinquent behavior, they can hardly be regarded as a cause of such activities. Industrial invasion and physical deterioration do, however, make an area less desirable for residential purposes. As a consequence, in time there is found a

movement from this area of those people able to afford more attractive surroundings. Further, the decrease in the number of buildings available for residential purposes leads to a decrease in the population of the area.

Population Increase or Decrease. Increase or decrease of population and rates of delinquents, by square-mile areas, do not exhibit a linear relationship. A relatively slight difference in rate of decrease of population, or of rate of increase for areas where the increase is slight, is generally associated with a considerable change in rates of delinquents; while for large differences in rates of increase of population, where increase is great, there is little or no consistent difference in rates of delinquents. Thus, areas increasing more than 70 per cent show no corresponding drop in rates of delinquents, although the relationship is clear up to this point. . . .

[T]here is a similarity between the pattern of distribution of delinquency and that of population growth or decline. The data do not establish a causal relationship between the two variables, however. The fact that the population of an area is decreasing does not impel a boy to become delinquent. It may be said, however, that decreasing population is usually related to industrial invasion of an area and contributes to the development of a general situation conducive to delinquency.

Population Composition in Relation to Rates of Delinquency

In Chicago, as in other northern industrial cities, as has been said, it is the most recent arrivals—persons of foreign birth and those who have migrated from other sections of this country—who find it necessary to make their homes in neighborhoods of low economic level. Thus the newer European immigrants are found concentrated in certain areas, while Negroes from the rural South and Mexicans occupy others of comparable status. Neither of these population categories, considered separately, however, is suitable for correlation with rates of delinquents, since some areas of high rates have a predominantly immigrant population and others are entirely or largely Negro. Both categories, however, refer to groups of low economic status, making their adjustment to a complex urban environment. Foreign-born and Negro heads of families will therefore be considered together in order to study this segregation of the newer arrivals, on a city-wide scale.

Percentage of Foreign-Born and Negro Heads of Families.[1] When the rates of delinquents in the 1927–33 series are correlated with the percentage of foreign-born and Negro heads of families as of 1930, by 140 square-mile areas, the coefficient is found to be .60 ± .03. Similarly, when the 1917–23 delinquency data are correlated with percentages of foreign-born and Negro heads of families for 1920, by the 113 areas into which the city was divided for that series, the coefficient is .58 ± .04. When rates of delinquents are calculated for the classes of areas . . . wide variations are found between the rates in the classes where the percentage of foreign-born and Negro heads of families is high and in those where it is low. . . . Since the number of foreign-born heads of families in the population decreased and the number of Negroes increased between 1920 and 1930, the total proportions of foreign-born and Negro heads of families in each class do not correspond. The variation with rates of delinquents, however, remains unchanged.

While it is apparent from these data that the foreign born and the Negroes are concentrated in the areas of high rates of delinquents, the meaning of this association is not easily determined. One might be led to assume that the relatively large number of boys brought into court is due to the presence of certain

racial or national groups, were it not for the fact that the population composition of many of these neighborhoods has changed completely, without appreciable change in their rank as to rates of delinquents. Clearly, one must beware of attaching causal significance to race or nativity. For, in the present social and economic system, it is the Negroes and the foreign born, or at least the newest immigrants, who have least access to the necessities of life and who are therefore least prepared for the competitive struggle. It is they who are forced to live in the worst slum areas and who are least able to organize against the effects of such living.

In Chicago three kinds of data are available for the study of nativity, nationality, and race in relation to rates of delinquents. These data concern (1) the succession of nationality groups in the high-rate areas over a period of years; (2) changes in the national and racial backgrounds of children appearing in the Juvenile Court; and (3) rates of delinquents for particular racial, nativity, or nationality groups in different types of areas at any given moment. In evaluating the significance of community characteristics found to be associated with high rates of delinquents, the relative weight of race, nativity, and nationality must be understood. . . .

It appears to be established, then, that each racial, nativity, and nationality group in Chicago displays widely varying rates of delinquents; that rates for immigrant groups in particular show a wide historical fluctuation; that diverse racial, nativity, and national groups possess relatively similar rates of delinquents in similar social areas; and that each of these groups displays the effect of disproportionate concentration in its respective areas at a given time. In the face of these facts it is difficult to sustain the contention that, by themselves, the factors of race, nativity, and nationality are vitally related to the problem of juvenile delinquency. It seems necessary to conclude, rather, that the significantly higher rates of delinquents found among the children of Negroes, the foreign born, and more recent immigrants are closely related to existing differences in their respective patterns of geographical distribution within the city. If these groups were found in the same proportion in all local areas, existing differences in the relative number of boys brought into court from the various groups might be expected to be greatly reduced or to disappear entirely.

It may be that the correlation between rates of delinquents and foreign-born and Negro heads of families is incidental to relationships between rates of delinquents and apparently more basic social and economic characteristics of local communities. Evidence that this is the case is seen in two partial correlation coefficients computed. Selecting the relief rate as a fair measure of economic level, the problem is to determine the relative weight of this and other factors. The partial correlation coefficient between rate of delinquents and percentage of families on relief, holding constant the percentage of foreign-born and Negro heads of families, in the 140 areas, is $.76 \pm .02$. However, the coefficient for rates of delinquents and percentage of foreign-born and Negro heads of families, when percentage of families on relief is held constant, is only $.26 \pm .05$. It is clear from these coefficients, therefore, that the percentage of families on relief is related to rates of delinquents in a more significant way than is the percentage of foreign-born and Negro heads of families.

It should be emphasized that the high degree of association between rates of delinquents and other community characteristics . . . does not mean that these characteristics must be regarded as causes of delinquency, or vice versa. Within certain types of areas differentiated in city growth, these phenomena appear together with such regularity that their rates are highly correlated. Yet the nature of the relationship between types of conduct and

given physical, economic, or demographic characteristics is not revealed by the magnitude either of zero-order or partial correlation coefficients, or of other measures of association.

A high degree of association may lead to the uncritical assumption that certain factors are causally related, whereas further analysis shows the existing association to be entirely adventitious. This is apparently the case with the data on nativity, nationality, and race. . . . That, on the whole, the proportion of foreign-born and Negro population is higher in areas with high rates of delinquents there can be little doubt; but the facts furnish ample basis for the further conclusion that the boys brought into court are not delinquent *because* their parents are foreign born or Negro but rather because of other aspects of the total situation in which they live. In the same way, the relationship between rates of delinquents and each associated variable should be explored, either by further analysis, by experimentation, or by the study of negative cases.

Summary

It has been shown that, when rates of delinquents are calculated for classes of areas grouped according to rate of any one of a number of community characteristics studied, a distinct pattern appears—the two sets of rates in each case varying together. When values of these other community characteristics, in turn, are calculated for classes of areas grouped by rate of delinquents, the same consistent trends appear. . . . The data . . . indicate a high degree of association between rates of delinquents and other community characteristics when correlations are computed on the basis of values in square-mile areas or similar subdivisions, and a still closer general association by large zones or classes of areas. . . .

Note

1. The categories "foreign born" and "Negro" are not compatible, since the former group is made up primarily of adults, while the latter includes all members of the race. The classification "heads of families" has been used, therefore, foreign-born and Negro family heads being entirely comparable groupings. The census classification "other races" has been included—a relatively small group, comprising Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, etc.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do Shaw and McKay have to say about delinquency rates in neighborhoods located in or near heavy industrial areas? What types of physical indicators are present in such areas?
2. What do Shaw and McKay conclude regarding the crime rates of neighborhoods containing a population composition high in minorities or recent immigrants?
3. What do Shaw and McKay claim would happen to delinquency/crime rates if racial/ethnic, as well as recent immigrants, were equally distributed across all neighborhoods of a city (such as Chicago)?

READING

In this selection, Christopher Lowenkamp, Frank Cullen, and Travis Pratt present an empirical study that seeks to replicate the findings of a well-respected previous test of the Chicago School model of social disorganization theory (as originally presented by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay). Specifically, this well-respected previous test of this theoretical model was performed by Robert Sampson and W. Byron Grove (1989), using data from the 1982 British Crime Survey. It generally supported the social disorganization theoretical framework, especially regarding the mediating effects of informal social controls in explaining the impact of structural factors (e.g., poverty) on neighborhood crime rates. In this study, Lowenkamp et al. find that a replication of this earlier study by Sampson and Grove (1989), which utilizes more recently collected data, also revealed a high level of empirical support for the social disorganization theoretical framework. The few differences between this and the earlier test (by Sampson and Grove) actually revealed more support for the Chicago School model. While reviewing this study, readers are encouraged to consider the places they have lived or visited that fit these characteristics.

Replicating Sampson and Groves's Test of Social Disorganization Theory

Revisiting a Criminological Classic

Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Francis T. Cullen, and Travis C. Pratt

Although Shaw and McKay's work linking social disorganization to community crime rates exerted considerable influence on criminological theory during the 1950s, by the mid-1980s, their perspective came to be considered by many as "little more than an interesting footnote in the history of community-related research" (Bursik 1986:36; see also, Pfohl 1985:158). Since that time, however, the social disorganization perspective has experienced a dramatic revitalization, reemerging from the dustbin of spent criminological paradigms to challenge for the status as a preeminent macro-level theory.

No single work did more to polish the tarnished image of social disorganization theory than Sampson and Groves's essay, published in 1989, "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory." Their research ostensibly showed that consistent

SOURCE: Adapted from Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Francis T. Cullen, and Travis C. Pratt, "Replicating Sampson and Grove's Test of Social Disorganization Theory: Revisiting a Criminological Classic." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 40, no. 4 (2003): 351–73. Copyright © 2003 Sage Publications, Inc. Used by permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

with the core predictions of the social disorganization perspective, the impact of structural factors on crime rates was mediated in important ways by direct measures of informal social controls (Taylor 2001). It is noteworthy that contemporary publications now cite Sampson and Groves's (1989) work as providing "a convincing test of Shaw and McKay's social disorganization thesis" (Bellair 1997:679) and as "one of the more important studies in criminological literature over the past decade" (Veysey and Messner 1999: 156). It is among the most cited criminological works and has become a staple in criminological textbooks published after 1989 (see, e.g., Akers 1999; Siegel 2000; Sykes and Cullen 1992; Tittle and Paternoster 2000).[1] In short, "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory" has emerged as a classic in the field of criminology.

As with other classic empirical works, however, the question arises as to whether Sampson and Groves's (1989) research offers virtually unshakable support for social disorganization theory or merely produced an idiosyncratic finding that was unique to a certain time and place. To gain insight on this issue, subsequent studies ideally would have replicated Sampson and Groves's work in different contexts and with refined measures of the study's core variables. But precise replications of their empirical test have been hampered by the failure of existing macro-level data sets to contain intervening, direct measures of informal social controls, including the full set of variables specified in the original study. A limited number of studies have moved beyond structural proxies to assess components of social disorganization or similar processes (Bellair 1997; Morenoff et al. 2001; Roundtree and Land 1996; Roundtree and Warner 1999; Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson et al. 1999; Velez 2001; Warner and Roundtree 1997). Yet, again, none has attempted to provide a *systematic* test of Sampson and Groves's complete model. Accordingly, we have a classic study—cited repeatedly in the literature—that remains, in effect, nonreplicated.

In this context, we suggest an alternative strategy for replicating Sampson and Groves's (1989) apparent empirical confirmation of social disorganization theory. We propose to revisit the British Crime Survey (BCS) (Home Office Crime and Criminal Justice Unit 1994) a decade later to investigate whether the findings reported in the original analysis will remain stable as social disorganization theory would predict. If the findings change in meaningful ways, it would suggest that the credence accorded Sampson and Groves's "classic" test is not warranted and that social disorganization theory cannot account for crime rates in a later time period, even though virtually the same data set and measures are being used. Phrased differently, it would call into question whether the social disorganization perspective is a "general theory" capable of accounting for ecological variations in crime rates across time and place.

If, however, their findings remain largely constant, it would suggest that the initial analysis by Sampson and Groves (1989) was not idiosyncratic but rather captured an ongoing empirical reality. Much as in other scientific fields, it would show that their conclusions could be reproduced under "laboratory conditions" (so to speak) that were similar to, but independent of, the original investigation. Admittedly, these findings would not necessarily mean that results from Britain would generalize, without specification, to the United States and other social contexts. Nonetheless, these results would bolster social disorganization theory's claim to be a perspective that warrants its place as a vital macro-level theory of crime and as deserving of further empirical investigation.

We begin by revisiting Sampson and Groves's (1989) classic test in more detail. This discussion serves as a prelude for a replication of their study using 1994 data from the BCS. This year of the BCS was chosen because it allows for

the closest replication of Sampson and Groves's study. As we shall see, in important ways, their findings are largely replicated by our analysis, suggesting that social disorganization theory is potentially useful in accounting for variation in macro-level crime rates across communities.

Finally, we note the growing recognition within criminology—and social science generally—of the value of systematic replication (Gendreau in press). Breaking new theoretical and/or empirical ground is perhaps of prime importance, for such efforts potentially push the field to new horizons. Nevertheless, the emphasis on innovation over systematic replication has a cost: the inability to build cumulative knowledge and to be able to state with confidence what is, and is not, known. Even when theories have been subjected to tens of empirical tests, it is difficult to assess the perspectives' merits because of the failure of the research to build in an organized way on one another (e.g., measure all core constructs. include similar measures) (Kempf 1993). In this regard, the current study should be seen as an initial, but much needed, attempt to contribute to the cumulative knowledge base on Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis of social disorganization theory.

Sampson and Groves's Test of Social Disorganization Theory

Measuring Social Disorganization: Intervening Variables

As Sampson and Groves (1989) noted, most ecological research inspired by Shaw and McKay (1972) examined the effects of structural antecedents (heterogeneity, socioeconomic status [SES], and mobility) on crime rates (see also Bursik 1986, 1988; Byrne and Sampson 1986). Although suggestive, these theoretical tests failed to provide direct measures of whether social disorganization prevailed within the ecological units under investigation (Veysey and Messner 1999). In essence, the lack of measures of the theorized mediators/intervening variables have created a "black box" phenomenon in which little is known about what exists between structural variables on the left side of a causal model and crimes rates on the other side of the model. Because there are no measures of the intervening variables, assumptions and inferences—plausible as they may be—must be invoked to explain the processes that might specify the relationships between the structural and dependent variables. Notably, this dearth of attention to measures of mediating processes plagues not only social disorganization theory, but also ecological theories in general (Byrne and Sampson 1986).

To test social disorganization theory with direct measures of intervening variables, Sampson and Groves (1989) used data from the 1982 BCS.[2] Their goal was to examine the mediating effects of intervening variables on the structural antecedents hypothesized to be causal influences on social disorganization and, subsequently, criminality within a community. Building on Shaw and McKay's (1972) original model of social disorganization, Sampson and Groves (1989) included three measures of community-level variables thought to cause social disorganization: low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility. In extending Shaw and McKay's (1972) model, Sampson and Groves specified variables for two additional sources of social disorganization: urbanization and family disruption (a variable drawn from Sampson's [1987] earlier work).

The uniqueness of Sampson and Groves's (1989) work stems from the authors' construction of direct measures of social disorganization. These were treated as intervening variables in their main analyses. These measures include sparse local friendship networks, low organizational participation, and unsupervised teenage peer groups. These

measures were largely developed based on works by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), Krohn (1986) and on the relation of these works to Shaw and McKay's (1972) theoretical framework. Each measure was based on aggregated data from individual respondents in 238 communities.

Empirical Support for Social Disorganization Theory

To determine the impact of structural antecedents on social disorganization and on crime, Sampson and Groves (1989) developed and analyzed several weighted least squares (WLS) regression models. The results of their analyses indicated that each of the structural factors significantly predicted the degree to which respondents perceived unsupervised peer groups to be a problem in their community (R^2=.30). The model predicting the level of local friendship networks indicated that only residential stability and urbanization had significant relationships with the dependent measure (R^2 = .26). Only one structural variable, SES, had a significant relationship with the level of organizational participation (R^2 = .07).

Turning to the results regarding the dependent variables, crime and delinquency, eight models were presented by Sampson and Groves (1989). Models predicting rates of mugging (R^2 = .61), stranger violence (R^2 = .15), total victimization (R^2 = .42), burglary (R^2 = .39), auto theft (R^2 = .30), and vandalism (R^2 = .21) indicated, with few exceptions, that the intervening variables thought to measure social disorganization had significant relationships with the dependent variables and mediated some of the direct effects of the structural variables. Regarding rates of self-reported offending, unsupervised peer groups mediated much of the effects of the structural variables when predicting violent offending (R^2 = .06) Along with local friendship networks, unsupervised peer groups also mediated the effects of the structural variables when predicting self-reported property offenses (R^2 = .09).

Replicating Sampson and Groves's Test

Although Sampson and Groves's (1989) study has not been systematically replicated outside their article,[3] their original data have recently been reassessed by Veysey and Messner (1999) through the use of LISREL instead of WLS regression analysis. The findings from the reanalysis were largely consistent with those from Sampson and Groves (1989): (1) the social disorganization variables mediated, although not completely, the effect of structural characteristics on rates of community victimization, and (2) the variable of unsupervised peer groups had the largest impact on the outcome measures. We should also note, however, that Veysey and Messner's (1999) LISREL analysis revealed that the measures of structural antecedents had various direct effects on rates of crime (as measured by victimization data). This finding, they suggest, supports a position that is conceptually inconsistent with Sampson and Groves's (1989) version of social disorganization theory because the disorganization perspective would argue that the effects of structural factors should be completely mediated by measures of each community's level of disorganization.

Nevertheless, in their article, Sampson and Groves (1989) did not contend that the intervening variables in their model mediated fully the effects of the five structural factors. Their original path model showed direct effects of structural factors, although, admittedly, they highlighted the ability of their measures of neighborhood disorganization and informal social control to mediate the impact of these factors on levels of crime. Thus, Veysey and Messner's (1999) findings that the social disorganization variables did not completely mediate the relationships between the structural variables and rates of crime is

perhaps best seen as an important clarification of, rather than a failure to replicate, Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis. In any case, we also replicate Veysey and Messner's (1999) analysis and discuss its implications for social disorganization theory.

Method

As with many surveys conducted repeated times, additions and deletions have been made to the content of information gathered in the BCS. After reviewing the codebooks for the BCSs conducted after 1982, we determined that the data from the 1994 survey contain those questions and information most similar to the data used by Sampson and Groves (1989). More recent BCSs no longer contain the same or, in some cases, similar questions employed by Sampson and Groves in the construction of their measures. In any event, the 1994 survey provided us with the data—collected a decade after the original study—to construct, in most instances, measures identical to those used by Sampson and Groves. In instances where identical measures could not be developed, very similar measures were constructed—each of which is noted below. The use of similar measures is significant because it means that differences in measurement cannot be employed to explain any divergent findings that might arise between the two studies.

Sample

The data for this study come from the 1994 BCS. The sampling method used is a multistage random probability design where 600 postal code sectors are selected by a systematic sampling method from a stratified list of postal code sectors. The probability for selection of any particular postal code sector was proportional to the total number of delivery points within that sector. Once 600 sectors were selected, 36 addresses were randomly selected from each sector yielding a total of 21,600 addresses. After removing all ineligible addresses and nonresponding households, the sample size was reduced to 14,617. This averages approximately 25 respondents per sector. The BCS collects data on the characteristics of adults and children that reside within the household as well as information pertaining to residential history, perceptions of crime, problems in the area, social habits, type of community, community involvement, social cohesion, criminal victimization, and experience with the police.

This sampling method differs from that used in 1982, where 60 addresses from 238 electoral wards were selected. After removing ineligible addresses and nonresponding households, the final sample size for 1982 was 10,905. Checks on the differences between these two sampling frames indicate no appreciable differences in crime rate trends due to the sampling frame (Lynn 1997).

Measures of Intervening Variables

The intervening variables in this model are very similar to those used by Sampson and Groves (1989). We have included measures of unsupervised teenage peer groups, local friendship networks, and organizational participation. Sampson and Groves measured *local friendship networks* based on responses to the question that asked the number of friends that lived in the local community. A mean was calculated for these responses and served as the measure of local friendship networks. Our local friendship indicator was derived from responses to the question, "Thinking of the people who live in this area, by this area, I mean a 10–15 minute walk from here, how many would you regard as friends or acquaintances?" We also calculated a mean response and used this as our measure.

As measured by Sampson and Groves (1989), *organizational participation* was the percentage of respondents that reported in meetings of clubs or committees the week

before the interview. Our measure of organizational participation is the percentage of people that reported participating in a meeting of a club or committee the last time they were out in the evening.

The final intervening variable, *unsupervised peer groups*, was measured by Sampson and Groves (1989) as the percentage of respondents that reported groups of teenagers making a nuisance of themselves as a very common problem in their neighborhood. Our measure differed slightly in that the question relating to teenage groups asked respondents how big a problem teenage groups hanging around on the streets was in their neighborhood. We calculated the percentage of people that reported teenage to be a very big problem. Although this measure differs from the 1982 BCS, for the purpose at hand, it is most likely a preferable measure. As Sampson and Groves (1989) note, by removing the mention of "nuisance" behavior, the concern that respondents are confounding crime rates with "nuisance" behavior of teens is obviated.

Measures of Structural Variables

Consistent with Sampson and Groves (1989), we constructed measures of SES, residential stability, ethnic heterogeneity, family disruption, and urbanization. We followed identical processes in constructing these measures (e.g., formulas, summed *z* scores percentages, and means). Wherever possible, we used the same questions and responses.

SES is a composite of measure of *z* scores tapping education (the percentage of people with a higher degree or teaching certification), occupation (percentage in professional or managerial occupations using the BCS social class ratings), and income (percentage reporting incomes in the top two income brackets).

Residential stability, as measured by Sampson and Groves (1989), was the percentage of people that were brought up in the area within a 15-minute walk from home. Due to changes in the questions on the BCS main questionnaire, our measure of residential stability is the percentage of people that reported living in the area (within a 15 minute walk) for 10 or more years.

Ethnic heterogeneity is calculated using the same formula as Sampson and Groves (1989) $(1 - \sum pi^2)$ where pi is the fraction of people in a particular group. Our measure of ethnic heterogeneity differed from Sampson and Groves's in that the 1994 BCS used seven rather than five categories of ethnicity.

Family disruption was the sum of *z* scores for the percentage of people surveyed that were either separated or divorced and the percentage of people that were separated, divorced, or single and had children in their household. This measure is identical to that used by Sampson and Groves (1989).

Urbanization, finally, was coded as either 0 or 1 according to the BCS data, where 1 represents an urban area. In 1982, the Planning and Research Applications Group's (PRAG) inner-city designations were used to determine which areas were inner-city areas. In 1984, the method for identifying inner-city areas was changed to where inner-city status is determined by the population density, percentage of owner occupied housing, and/or the social class of the areas based on standard occupational classification. This is the same procedure used in subsequent surveys.

Measure of Crime

Consistent with Sampson and Groves's (1989) final analysis (as well as the reanalysis of the 1982 BCS data by Veysey and Messner 1999), our measure of crime is the *total victimization rate,* which reflects the rate of personal and household victimization. This variable consists of the sum of crimes that can be clas-

sified as personal or household victimization and then standardizing it by the number of respondents in the area.

Results

The results of the replication of Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis using the 1994 BCS data are presented here in two sections. First, we report the results of the social disorganization models using the 1994 BCS data to determine—on their own—whether they support the major propositions specified by social disorganization theory according to Sampson and Groves. Second, we present a series of statistical comparisons between the standardized parameter estimates from the 1982 wave of the BCS to determine whether any of the results from the present replication study are significantly different from those of the original study.

Social Disorganization Models From the 1994 BCS

As with Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis, our replication using the 1994 BCS data proceeded in two stages. First, we examined the effect of the five structural characteristics on the three measures of social disorganization outlined by Sampson and Groves. Second, the effects of the social disorganization measures as "intervening" variables (i.e., as mediators of the effects of the structural characteristics) predicting neighborhood crime rates were assessed.

Structural Characteristics and Social Disorganization

Table 1 contains the results of the WLS regression models testing the effects of the structural characteristics on the three dimensions of social disorganization using the 1994 BCS. For comparative purposes (which will be explicitly addressed below), the WLS coefficients from Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis of the 1982 BCS data are reprinted in Table 1 as well. Consistent with the propositions set forth by Sampson and Groves, the first model indicates that SES, ethnic heterogeneity, and urbanization all exert a statistically significant inverse effect on local friendship networks. Family disruption was unrelated to local friendship networks, yet residential stability was positively

Table 1 Weighted Least Squares Regression Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Effects of Structural Variables on Measures of Social Disorganization ($n = 600$)

	Local Friendship Networks		Unsupervised Peer Groups		Organizational Participation	
Structural Variable	**1982**	**1994**	**1982**	**1994**	**1982**	**1994**
Socioeconomic status	–.06	–.11**	–.34***	–.23***	.17**	.07
Ethnic heterogeneity	.02	–.27***	.13**	.09**	–.06	–.18***
Residential stability	.42***	.26***	.12*	.04	–.09	.16***
Family disruption	–.03	–.02	.22***	.08*	–.02	–.09**
Urbanization	–.27***	–.11**	.15**	.29***	–.10	.03
R-Square	.26***	.22***	.30***	.28***	.07***	.10***

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

and significantly related to this indicator of social disorganization.

The WLS model predicting unsupervised peer groups follows a similar pattern. Levels of ethnic heterogeneity, family disruption, and urbanization were all positively and significantly related to the existence of unsupervised peer groups. Unlike the previous model, however, residential stability was not a statistically significant predictor of this dimension of social disorganization in this model. Nevertheless, also consistent with social disorganization theory, the effect of SES on unsupervised peer groups was inverse and statistically significant.

The WLS model predicting the social disorganization measure of organizational participation is not quite as robust as the previous two models. Compared to the *R*-square values of the models predicting local friendship networks and unsupervised peer groups (.22 and .28, respectively), the *R*-square for the model predicting organizational participation (.10) is considerably smaller. Even so, consistent with social disorganization theory, ethnic heterogeneity, residential stability, and family disruption were all significantly related to organizational participation in the theoretically expected direction. Inconsistent with the propositions made by Sampson and Groves (1989), however, SES and urbanization failed to significantly predict levels of organizational participation.

Social Disorganization and Total Victimization

Table 2 contains the results of the WLS model using the structural characteristics and the social disorganization measures to predict total criminal victimization. Two issues are important when examining this model: (1) whether the social disorganization measures significantly predict total criminal victimization, and (2) whether the social disorganization measures mediate the effects of the structural characteristics on total victimization.

Table 2 Weighted Least Squares Regression Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Effects of Structural Variables and Measures of Social Disorganization on Total Victimization Rates ($n = 600$)

Independent Variable	Total Victimization Rate	
	1982	**1994**
Socioeconomic status	−.03	.06
Ethnic heterogeneity	.08	.06
Residential stability	.03	−.06
Family disruption	.20***	.17***
Urbanization	.21***	.03
Local friendship networks	−.12**	−.14***
Unsupervised peer groups	.34***	.40***
Organizational participation	−.11**	−.06
R-square	.42***	.28***

$^{**}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .01$.

With regard to the first issue, all three of the social disorganization measures were significantly related to total criminal victimization in the theoretically expected direction. The effect is particularly strong for the relationship between unsupervised peer groups and total victimization. These results are generally supportive of the social disorganization model articulated by Sampson and Groves (1989). The issue of the mediating effects of the social disorganization variables, on the other hand, offers less support for the social disorganization paradigm. In particular, after controlling for the measures of social disorganization, the structural characteristics of residential stability and family disruption still maintained statistically significant relationships with total victimization. Alternatively, on controlling for the social disorganization measures, SES, ethnic heterogeneity, and urbanization failed to significantly predict total victimization.

Summary of 1994 BCS Replication

Our test of social disorganization theory using the 1994 BCS data is, on balance, supportive of the major propositions made by the theory in three respects. First, each of the five structural characteristics significantly predicted at least two of the three social disorganization measures specified by Sampson and Groves (1989). Second, each of the social disorganization measures was significantly related to rates of total criminal victimization. Finally, although the predicted relationships did not always occur, in the majority of cases, the social disorganization measures did mediate the effects of the structural characteristics on levels of total criminal victimization While this analysis does provide considerable support for the social disorganization perspective, it still remains to be seen whether the results found here are more or less consistent with those found in Sampson and Groves's analysis. In short, it is necessary to empirically explore the degree to which the results generated by the analysis of the 1982 BCS data differ from our replication study using the 1994 BCS data.

Statistical Comparisons Between the 1982 and 1994 Parameter Estimates

Using the results from the 1994 BCS analysis, 95 percent confidence intervals were constructed around each of the standardized parameter estimates from the WLS regression models. Once the upper and lower boundaries of the confidence intervals were established, we could then determine whether the parameter estimates from our replication were significantly different from Sampson and Groves's (1989) analyses of the 1982 BCS data (i.e., the coefficients presented in Table1 and Table 2).[5] In essence, this series of significance tests contained two main objectives. First, they were intended to reveal whether the results of Sampson and Groves's (1989) original study would, for the most part, be reproduced using a different data set (i.e., to determine whether the results would be consistent across data sources). Second, if significant differences did emerge, these tests were also designed to uncover whether such differences do, or do not, support social disorganization theory (i.e., do the significant differences between coefficients indicate more or less support for the theory?).

Structural Characteristics and Social Disorganization

Table 3 contains the results of the significance tests between the 1982 and 1994 BCS coefficients. Less than one-third of the coefficient comparisons (7 of 23) indicated a statistically significant difference. For the most part, these differences were found in the effects of the structural characteristics on the social disorganization variables. It is important to note, however, that none of these significant differences are inconsistent with social disorganization theory.

The effects of residential stability and urbanization on local friendship networks were smaller in the 1994 sample (yet still in the expected directions), but the effect of ethnic heterogeneity is significantly stronger in the 1994 analysis. The structural predictors of unsupervised peer groups followed a similar trend: the effect of family disruption was about one-third as strong in the 1994 sample (yet still in the expected direction), but the influence of urbanization was nearly twice as strong in the 1994 analysis. Only the effect of residential stability was significantly different for the structural predictors of organizational participation. This relationship was nonsignificant in the 1982 analysis (and the direction of this coefficient was negative), yet the 1994 data show that residential

Table 3 Comparison of Standardized Weighted Least Squares Regression Coefficients Across 1982 and 1994 British Crime Survey Samples

Variable	Friendship Networks	Unsupervised Peer Groups	Organized Participation	Total Victimization
Structural characteristics				
Socioeconomic status	NS	NS	NS	NS
Ethnic heterogeneity	Sig[a]	NS	NS	NS
Residential stability	Sig[a]	NS	Sig[a]	NS
Family disruption	NS	Sig[a]	NS	NS
Urbanization	Sig[a]	Sig[a]	NS	Sig[a]
Social disorganization measures				
Local friendship networks	—	—	—	NS
Unsupervised peer groups	—	—	—	NS
Organizational participation	—	—	—	NS

a. Standardized parameter estimates differ significantly, yet the estimate generated by the 1994 British Crime Survey sample is consistent with social disorganization theory.

stability has a positive and statistically significant relationship with organizational participation.

Social Disorganization and Total Victimization

As for the full model predicting total criminal victimization, only the effect of urbanization was significantly different from the 1982 to the 1994 BCS data. In Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis, the direct effect of urbanization on total victimization was not fully mediated by the social disorganization variables. The magnitude of the urbanization coefficient in the 1994 analysis, however, is about one-seventh of the size of the parameter estimate from the 1982 sample. This finding from the 1994 BCS data indicates greater support for social disorganization theory since the direct effect of this structural characteristic is even more dampened by the presence of the social disorganization variables.

As an added check on the direct and indirect effects of the structural characteristics on the total victimization rate, consistent with Veysey and Messner's (1999) analysis of the 1982 BCS data we reestimated the full model in LISREL. As can be seen in Table 4, these results largely conform to the propositions set forth by Sampson and Groves (1989). To be sure, the overall model provides a relatively good fit to the data, with a goodness-of-fit index (GFI) of .95 and an adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) of .84—both of which are consistent with Veysey and Messner's (1999) results when they allowed the error terms of the five structural characteristics to correlate (i.e., their analytic improvement over the path analysis techniques employed by Sampson and Groves).[6] Even so, it is noteworthy that much of the total effects of the structural characteristics on the total victimization rate are indirect through the social disorganization variables.

Table 4 Direct and Indirect Effects of Structural Characteristics and Social Disorganization Variables on the Total Victimization Rate Using LISREL

Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Through	Indirect Effect	Total
Socioeconomic status	.060	Organizational participation	–.001	–.081
		Unsupervised teen groups	–1.40	
Ethnic heterogeneity	.060	Unsupervised teen groups	.048	.108
Urbanization	.030	Organizational participation	.005	.057
		Local friendship networks	.022	
Residential stability	–.070	Local friendship networks	–.052	–.122
Family disruption	.170	Unsupervised teen groups	.056	.226
Local friendship networks	–.140	Unsupervised teen groups	–.012	–.152
Organizational participation	–.060	Unsupervised teen groups	–.016	–.076
Unsupervised teen groups	.400	—	—	.400

GFI = .95. AFGI = .84.

Summary on 1982 and 1994 BCS Comparisons

Our replication of the test of social disorganization theory conducted by Sampson and Groves (1989), using the 1994 BCS data, generally mirrors the results that were found using the 1982 BCS data. Like Sampson and Groves's study, our analysis reveals a relatively high level of empirical support for the social disorganization perspective. Furthermore, the magnitudes of the parameter estimates across the two samples are generally similar. Indeed, significant differences between the coefficients across the two data sets appeared in fewer than one-third of the comparisons. Notably, in each instance where the parameter estimates from the 1994 sample did differ significantly from the 1982 data source, the results generated from the more recent sample indicated a greater degree of support for social disorganization theory than was previously revealed. On balance, therefore, our analysis provides both empirical support for the social disorganization perspective and support for the conclusion that Sampson and Groves's results were not idiosyncratic to the 1982 BCS data.

Discussion

Criminologists often embrace particular theoretical explanations for reasons that have little to do with a given theory's empirical validity (Cole 1975; Gould 1996; Hagan 1973; Lilly, Cullen, and Ball 2002; Pfohl 1985; Pratt and Cullen 2000). In this regard, social disorganization theory's "second wind" could be due, at least in part, to the emergence of growing public concern over the patterns of "incivility" and "disorder" that characterize certain portions of high-crime urban areas (Beckett 1997; DiIulio 1997; Skogan 1992; Wilson and Kelling 1982). Nevertheless, the empirical validation that Sampson and Groves's (1989) study accorded the social disorganization perspective clearly was integral to the perspective's revitalization.

Although subsequent studies have also revealed a certain measure of support for the major tenets of social disorganization theory (Bellair 1997; and Bergen and Herman 1998; Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Krivo and Peterson 1996; Messner and Sampson 1991; Miethe, Hughes, and McDowall 1991; Morenoff and Sampson 1997; Sampson and Raudenbush 1999; Sampson et al. 1997; Warner and Pierce

1993; Warner and Roundtree 1997), none have attempted to replicate Sampson and Groves's (1989) analysis systematically and with a different data set. This gap in the research literature is potentially problematic. One does not need not look terribly far to see the risks inherent in accepting a theoretical premise as valid—and constructing a set of social policies consistent with the theory—based on the results of a single study that may have produced results that were unique to a particular point in time and space.[7] More generally, the reproducibility of findings is a key feature of science—an activity that lacks the luster of discovering a new idea but is the linchpin to establishing whether initial claims should be as accepted as "knowledge" (Gendreau in press; Hall 2000). In this context, and given the extant void in the criminological literature, our analysis was intended to assess whether the results of Sampson and Groves's (1989) study reflected time-specific phenomena or an enduring social reality. Upon comparing the findings of our analyses of the 1994 BCS data to those of Sampson and Groves's models assessing the 1982 wave of the BCS, four conclusions can be drawn.

First, independent of any comparisons to Sampson and Groves's (1989) work, our analysis can be viewed on its own as having revealed a high level of support for social disorganization theory. Our measures of local friendship networks, unsupervised peer groups, and organizational participation effectively mediated—to a large extent—the relationships between certain structural characteristics of neighborhoods and rates of criminal victimization. These measures of social disorganization were, in turn, significantly related to the total victimization rate (with the exception of organizational participation). Thus, the major propositions specified by social disorganization theory—that certain structural characteristics of communities affect the ability of residents to impose social control mechanisms over their members, and that the loss of such control mechanisms affects rates of crime—are supported here.

Second, the results of our replication are generally consistent with those found in the original study by Sampson and Groves (1989). Indeed, the major findings related to the direct, indirect, and mediating effects of community-level structural characteristics and social disorganization variables are generally reproduced here with a different data set. Our replication, therefore, indicates a pattern of consistency among the relationships specified by Sampson and Groves across the 1982 and 1994 BCS data sets.

Third, not all of the relationships revealed in the original work of Sampson and Groves (1989) were identically replicated using the 1994 BCS data. In particular, nearly a third of the parameter estimates for the relationships specified and tested in the original study and our replication differed significantly. Even so, it is important to note that when parameter estimates did differ significantly, they all diverged in a direction that was consisted with social disorganization theory (i.e., stronger mediating effects of the social disorganization variables on the relationships between the structural characteristics and total victimization).

Fourth, when taken together, these factors indicate that the theoretical attention that has been accorded to Sampson and Groves's (1989) "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory" is warranted. Although we cannot specify the degree to which these findings would generalize to social settings outside of Britain, our results suggest that Sampson and Groves's study appears to have captured an ongoing empirical reality. In short, our replication reinforces the view that Sampson and Groves's essay deserves the title of a "criminological classic."

In concluding that the analysis provides added support for social disorganization theory, however, we are not arguing for theoretical stagnation. Thus, compared to the measures used to assess the intervening or mediating

variables in our study, additional or more finely calibrated measures of social disorganization might account more extensively for the direct effects of structural antecedents. But the alternative possibility is that the direct effects reflect causal processes that other theories are better suited to explain. Furthermore, as others have pointed out (Veysey and Messner 1999), the effects mediating disorganization factors in Sampson and Groves's model may themselves be open to alternative theoretical interpretation. Sampson and Groves chose to interpret social disorganization theory as a perspective that linked crime rates to the breakdown of informal social control. Other scholars, however, have argued that Shaw and McKay (1972) offered a "mixed model" of delinquency, which tied crime both to the weakening of control *and* to the transmission and learning of criminal values (Kornhauser 1978). Mediating variables, such as unsupervised peers, thus might capture not only the attenuation of control but also the presence of criminal subcultures and social learning (Veysey and Messner 1999). Further research is needed to reveal more precisely why variables have the effects they do and the implications of these finding for competing theories of crime.

Equally salient, the social disorganization perspective itself is evolving. Perhaps the most noteworthy advance is Sampson et al's (1997) introduction of the concept of "collective efficacy." At times, it appears that the concept of collective efficacy is the "opposite" of social disorganization (Taylor 2001:128). However, the theoretical advance comes in at least three ways. First, the concept of efficacy involves not only informal control but also "trust" or "social cohesion" (Sampson et al. 1997:920)—or what might be called "social support" (Cullen 1994). That is, control and trust are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Second, the notion of "efficacy" implies a resource that can be activated. The willingness to apply controls is found in social disorganization theory as well, but in Sampson et al.'s (1997) work, the choice of the word efficacy implies more explicitly that collectives differ in their ability to actively fight against neighborhood conditions that are criminogenic. Efficacy is not just a static state of being but capital that can be "called into play" when needed (e.g., to clear drug pushers from a community playground).Third, the collective efficacy model moves beyond social disorganization theory's traditional neglect of structural inequality (Pfohl 1985), and sees antecedent variables not as separate entities but as interrelated. In particular, they link collective efficacy to the *concentration* of disadvantage and advantage (Sampson et al. 1997, 1999).

In many ways, these theoretical extensions are to be welcomed. Nonetheless, three observations are warranted. First, collective efficacy encapsulates the core elements of social disorganization, with the model including informal social control in its measures and conceptualization of efficacy. Accordingly, studies providing empirical confirmation for social disorganization theory—such as our analyses and Sampson and Groves's (1989) original work—lend indirect support for collective efficacy theory. Second, it has yet to be shown that collective efficacy theory is empirically superior to social disorganization theory. Unlike tests of individual-level theories (Hirschi 1969), macro-level theories only rarely are tested against one another. Social disorganization theory—especially if tested in all its complexity as a 'mixed model"—might rival collective efficacy in its ability to explain variation in crime rates. Third, if social disorganization theory is the product of 1920s Chicago (Lilly et al. 2002; Pfohl 1985), collective efficacy theory is the product of its time—current-day Chicago (Sampson et al. 1997). It remains to be seen whether this perspective will have more explanatory power than social disorganization theory when applied to other contexts, including, for example, urban areas located elsewhere in the United States, in Europe, and in rapidly growing developing nations.

Notes

1. According to the Social Sciences Citation Index, Sampson and Groves's 1989 publication has been cited 232 times, including 96 times since 1999 and 32 times in the past 14 months. In a recent article, Wright, Malia, and Johnson (1999) reviewed the most cited criminology and criminal justice works in 107 articles from the leading sociology journals. Sampson and Groves's publication ranked third, higher than a number of noteworthy works (e.g., Black 1976; Blau and Blau 1982; Cohen and Felson 1979; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Kornhauser 1978; Merton 1968).

2. Sampson and Groves (1989) focused primarily on the 1982 BCS data. They supplemented their analysis with the 1984 BCS data, and the results were largely consistent with those from the 1982 sample. Thus, consistent with Sampson and Groves' original focus, in the present study, we compare our results to their analyses of the 1982 BCS data.

3. We should note that in their original article, Sampson and Groves (1989) attempted to confirm their 1982 analysis with a partial replication of data drawn from the 1984 BCS (e.g., there was no measure of organizational participation). Their results were consistent with the findings drawn from the 1982 analysis and lent added support to social disorganization theory. Our replication is patterned after the more complete 1982 study. In either case, however, our independent replication is conducted on BCS data collected a full decade after the surveys analyzed by Sampson and Groves.

5. Traditional methods for comparing the equality of coefficients (see, e.g., Brame et al. 1998; Clogg, Petkova, and Haritou 1995; Cohen 1983) require the use of both the metric parameter estimates and the standard errors from each model. Since we only have such information (specifically, the standard errors) for our 1994 analysis, the use of confidence intervals for this purpose is the next methodologically rigorous method at our disposal.

6. Veysey and Messner (1999) did, however, arrive at a model with a Goodness-of-Fit Index of .988 and an Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index of .939 when they freed the parameters to estimate direct effects for socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, residential stability, and family disruption on the total victimization rate.

7. For example, in their classic Minneapolis experiment, Sherman and Berk (1984) found that arrest had a deterrent effect on domestic violence recidivism. Subsequent replications, however, produced inconsistent results and the specification that arrest primarily had effects on offenders with social bonds (see, e.g., Dunford, Huizinga, and Elliott 1990; Sherman and Berk 1984; Sherman et al. 1991, 1992).

References

Akers, Ronald L. 1999. *Criminological Theories: Introduction and Evaluation.* 2nd ed. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn.

Beckett, Katherine. 1997. *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bellair, Paul E. 1997. "Social interaction and Community Crime: Examining the Importance of Neighborhood Networks." *Criminology* 35: 677–703.

Bergen, Albert, and Max Herman. 1998. "Immigration, Race, and Riot: The 1992 Los Angeles Uprising." *American Sociological Review* 63: 39–54.

Black, Donald. 1976. *The Behavior of Law.* New York: Academic Press.

Blau, Judith R., and Peter M. Blau. 1982. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review* 47: 114–29.

Brame, Robert, Raymond Paternoster, Paul Mazerolle, and Alex Piquero. 1998. "Testing for the Equality of Maximum-Likelihood Regression Coefficients Between Two Independent Equations." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 14: 245–61.

Bursik, Robert J. 1986. "Delinquency Rates as Sources of Ecological Change." Pp. 63–74 in *The Social Ecology of Crime,* edited by James M. Byrne and Robert J. Sampson. New York: Springer-Verlag.

______. 1988. "Social Disorganization and Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Problems and Prospects." *Criminology* 26: 519–51.

Bursik, Robert J., and Harold G. Grasmick. 1993. "Economic Deprivation and Neighborhood Crime Rates, 1960–1980." *Law and Society Review* 27: 263–83.

Byrne, James M., and Robert J. Sampson. 1986. "Key Issues in the Social Ecology of Crime." Pp. 1–22 in *The Social Ecology of Crime,* edited by James M. Byrne and Robert J. Sampson. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Clogg, Clifford C., Eva Petkova, and Adamantios Haritou. 1995. "Statistical Methods for Comparing Regression Coefficients Between Models." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 1261–93.

Cohen, Ayala. 1983. "Comparing Regression Coefficients Across Subsamples: A Study of the Statistical Test." *Sociological Methods and Research* 12: 77–94.

Cohen, Lawrence E., and Marcus Felson. 1979. "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." *American Sociological Review* 44: 588–608.

Cole, Stephen. 1975. "The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Deviance as a Case Study." Pp. 175–200 in *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merlon,* edited by Lewis A. Coser. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Cullen, Francis T. 1994. "Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences." *Justice Quarterly* 11: 527–59.

DiIulio, John J. 1997. "Are Voters Fools? Crime, Public Opinion, and Democracy." *Corrections Management Quarterly* 1 (3): 1–5.

Dunford, Franklyn, David Huizinga, and Delbert S. Elliott 1990. "The Role of Arrest in Domestic Assault: The Omaha Experiment." *Criminology* 28: 183–206.

Gendreau, Paul. In press. "We Must Do a Better Job of Cumulating Knowledge." *Canadian Psychology.*

Gottfredson, Michael R., and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gould, Stephen Jay. 1996. *The Mismeasure of Man.* Rev. ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Hagan, John. 1973. "Labeling and Deviance: A Case Study in the 'Sociology of the Interesting.'" *Social Problems* 20: 447–58.

Hall Nancy S. 2000. "The Key Role of Replication in Science." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* November 10, B14.

Hirschi, Travis, 1969. *Causes of Delinquency.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Home Office Crime and Criminal Justice Unit Office of Population Census and Social Surveys Division. 1994. *British Crime Survey* (computer file). Colchester, Essex, UK: The Data Archive.

Kasarda, John D., and Morris Janowitz. 1974. "Community Attachment in Mass Society." *American Sociological Review* 39: 328–39.

Kempf, Kimberly L. 1993. "The Empirical Status of Hirschi's Control Theory." Pp. 143–85 in *New Directions in Criminological Theory: Advances in Criminological Theory,* Vol. 4, edited by Freda Adler and William S. Laufer. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Kornhauser, Ruth R. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Krivo, Lauren J., and Ruth D. Peterson. 1996. "Extremely Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Urban Crime." *Social Forces* 75: 619–50.

Krohn, Marvin D. 1986. "The Web of Conformity: A Network Approach to the Explanation of Delinquent Behavior." *Social Problems* 33: 81–93.

Lilly, Robert J., Francis T. Cullen, and Richard A. Ball. 2002. *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences.* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lynn, Peter. 1997. "Sampling Frame Effects on the British Crime Survey." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series* 160 (2): 253–69.

Merton, Robert K. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure.* New York: Free Press.

Messner, Steven F., and Robert J. Sampson. 1991. "The Sex Ratio, Family Disruption, and Rates of Violent Crime: The Paradox of Demographic Structure." *Social Forces* 69: 693–713.

Miethe, Terance D., Michael Hughes, and David McDowall. 1991. "Social Change and Crime Rates: An Evaluation of Alternative Theoretical Approaches." *Social Forces* 70: 165–85.

Morenoff, Jeffrey D., and Robert J. Sampson. 1997. "Violent Crime and the Spatial Dynamics of Neighborhood Transition: Chicago, 1970-1990." *Social Forces* 76: 31–64.

Morenoff, Jeffrey D., Robert J. Sampson, and Stephen W. Raudenbush, 2001. "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence." *Criminology* 39: 517–59.

Pfohl, Stephen J. 1985. *Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pratt, Travis C., and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* 38: 931–64.

Roundtree, Pamela Wilcox, and Kenneth C. Land. 1996. "Burglary Victimization, Perceptions of Crime Risk, and Routine Activities: A Multilevel Analysis Across Seattle Neighborhoods and

Census Tracts." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33: 147–80.

Roundtree, Pamela Wilcox, and Barbara D. Warner. 1999. "Social Ties and Crime: Is the Relationship Gendered?" *Criminology* 37: 789–812.

Sampson, Robert J. 1987. "Urban Black Violence: The Effect of Male Joblessness and Family Disruption." *American Journal of Sociology* 93: 348–82.

Sampson, Robert J., and W. Byron Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 774–802.

Sampson, Robert J., Jeffery D. Morenoff, and Felton Earls. 1999. "Beyond Social Capital: Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children." *American Sociological Review* 64: 633–60.

Sampson, Robert J., and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1999. "Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods." *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 603–51.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277: 918–24.

Shaw, Clifford R., and Henry D. McKay. 1972. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sherman, Lawrence W., and Richard A. Berk. 1984. "The Specific Deterrent Effects of Arrest for Domestic Assault." *American Sociological Review* 49: 261–72.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Janell D. Schmidt, Dennis P. Rogan, Patrick R. Gartin, Ellen G. Cohn, Dean J. Collins, and Anthony R. Bacich. 1991. "From Initial Deterrence to Long-Term Escalation: Short-Custody Arrest for Poverty Ghetto Domestic Violence." *Criminology* 29: 821–50.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Douglas A. Smith, Janell D. Schmidt, and Dennis P. Rogan. 1992. "Crime, Punishment, and Stake in Conformity; Legal and Informal Control of Domestic Violence." *American Sociological Review* 57: 680–90.

Siegel, Larry. 2000. *Criminology.* 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Skogan, Wesley G. 1992. *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sykes, Gresham M., and Francis T. Cullen. 1992. *Criminology.* 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Taylor, Ralph B. 2001. "The Ecology of Crime, Fear, and Delinquency: Social Disorganization Versus Social Efficacy. In *Explaining Criminals and Crime: Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory,* edited by Raymond Paternoster and Ronet Bachman. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Tittle, Charles R., and Raymond Paternoster. 2000. *Social Deviance and Crime: An Organizational and Theoretical Approach.* Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Velez, Maria B. 2001. "The Role of Public Social Control in Urban Neighborhoods: A Multi-Level Analysis of Victimization Risk." *Criminology* 39: 837–64.

Veysey, Bonita M., and Steven F. Messner. 1999. "Further Testing of Social Disorganization Theory: An Elaboration of Sampson and Groves's 'Community Structure and Crime'." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36: 156–74.

Warner, Barbara D., and Glenn L. Pierce. 1993. "Reexamining Social Disorganization Theory Using Calls to the Police as a Measure of Crime." *Criminology* 31: 493–517.

Warner, Barbara D., and Pamela Wilcox Roundtree. 1997. "Local Ties in a Community and Crime Model: Questioning the Systemic Nature of Informal Social Control." *Social Problems* 44: 520–36.

Wilson, James Q., and George L. Kelling. 1982. "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety." *Atlantic Monthly,* March, 29–38.

Wright, Richard A., Michael Malia, and C. Wayne Johnson. 1999. "Invisible Influence: A Citation Analysis of Crime and Justice Articles Published in Leading Sociology Journal." *Journal of Crime and Justice* 22: 147–65.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Identify and discuss the three types of variables used by Lowenkamp et al. (as well as Sampson and Grove) to measure the key intervening variables in the model of social disorganization. Which of these three do you feel is the best measure of community (or informal) controls/organization, and why? Which of these do you feel is the least applicable, and why?

2. Identify and discuss the five types of structural variables of neighborhoods that Lowenkamp et al. (as well as Sampson and Grove) claim are mediated by the intervening variables (which you discussed in Review Question #1). Which of these structural variables do you think is most vital in predicting crime rates of neighborhoods, and why? Which structural variable do you think is least vital, and why?

3. If you were asked to make a conclusion as a social scientist regarding the current state of empirical evidence or support for Shaw and McKay's proposed model of social disorganization, what would you conclude? What key weaknesses do you see with the model or the way it has been tested?

4. To what extent do the findings presented by Lowenkamp et al. (or Samson and Grove) fit what you have observed in your own local communities?

READING

In this selection, Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti propose a theoretical model that explains how an entire other culture (e.g., subculture) can exist, even within an existing normative framework by a majority of individuals in a society. The authors propose a "subculture of violence," which they note is predominately held by young males. They argue that violence is a theme in the "values that make up the life-style, the socialization process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions." This selection reveals the core elements of this theory, including the social learning and cultural context of this subculture, as well as conclusions that can be made regarding the existence of such subcultures. While reading this selection, readers are encouraged to think about people they know or grew up with and consider if they can relate adherence to subcultural norms regarding violence to anyone in their past.

The Subculture of Violence

Marvin E. Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti

The Thesis of a Subculture of Violence

This section examines the proposition that there is a subculture of violence . . . to extend a theoretical formulation regarding the existence of subcultures in general if we are to hypothesize a particular subculture of violence. It would be difficult to support an argument that a subculture exists in relation to a single cultural interest, and the thesis of a subculture of violence does not suggest a monolithic character.

SOURCE: Marvin E. Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti, The Subculture of Violence (London: Routledge Publishers, 1967), 140-61.
Copyright © 1967 Routledge. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK.

It should be remembered that the term itself—subculture—presupposes an already existing complex of norms, values, attitudes, material traits, etc. What the subculture-of-violence formulation further suggests is simply that there is a potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up the life-style, the socialization process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions.

The analysis of violent aggressive behavior has been the focus of interest of many social and biological researchers, and psychology has attempted to build several theories to explain its phenomenology, ranging from the death-aggression instinct of the psychoanalytic school to the frustration-aggression hypothesis. The present discussion is the result of joint explorations in theory and research in psychology and in sociology, using the concept of subculture as a learning environment. Our major area of study has been assaultive behavior, with special attention to criminal homicide . . . [S]ome of the main trends in criminological thinking related to this topic must now be anticipated for the proper focus of the present discussion.

Isolated sectional studies of homicide behavior are extremely numerous, and it is not our intention to examine them in this chapter. There are basically two kinds of criminal homicide: (1) premeditated, felonious, intentional murder; (2) slaying in the heat of passion, or killing as a result of intent to do harm but without intent to kill. A slaying committed by one recognized as psychotic or legally insane, or by a psychiatrically designated abnormal subject involves clinical deviates who are generally not held responsible for their behavior, and who, therefore, are not considered culpable. We are eliminating these cases from our present discussion, although subcultural elements are not irrelevant to the analysis of their psychopathological phenomenology.

Probably fewer than five per cent of all known homicides are premeditated, planned intentional killings, and the individuals who commit them are most likely to be episodic offenders who have never had prior contact with the criminal law. Because they are rare crimes often planned by rationally functioning individuals, perhaps they are more likely to remain undetected. We believe that a type of analysis different from that presented here might be applicable to these cases. Our major concern is with the bulk of homicides—the passion crimes, the violent slayings—that are not premeditated and are not psychotic manifestations. Like Cohen, who was concerned principally with most delinquency that arises from the "working-class" ethic, so we are focusing [on] the preponderant kind of homicide, although our analysis . . . will include much of the available data on homicide [in] general.

Social Learning and Conditioning

Studies of child-rearing practices in relation to the development of aggressive traits lead us to consider briefly one important theoretical development from the field of general and social psychology which, in our opinion, provides the theoretical bridge between an individual's violent behavior and his subcultural value allegiance. We are referring to what is generally included under the heading of 'social learning.' Issues which arise in any analysis of the structure and phenomenology of subcultures are the process of transmitting the subculture values, the extent of individual differences in the strength of allegiance to those values, and the fact that not all the individuals with ecological propinquity share value and motive identity with the surrounding culture. The process of social learning, through a number of mechanisms ranging from repetitive contacts to the subtler forms of imitation and identification, involves the acquisition of value systems in early childhood and their integration in the complex personality trait-value-motive system, which makes up the adult global individuality.

A recent paper by Jeffery (1965) summarizes a number of theoretical statements accepting the general principle that criminal behavior can be explained as learned behavior if conceptualized as operant behavior and reinforced through reward and immediate gratification. However, the complexity of learning theory and the serious uncertainties that still plague its core concepts have thus far produced an heuristic deficiency in transferring from theory and experimental laboratory research to field applications. The same may be said about transferring to diagnostically oriented studies of the differential psychology of violent offenders. Admittedly, the transposition from laboratory and animal experimentation to the street corner and the prison is not easy, is somewhat speculative, and may prove impossible until the social-learning approach can produce measurable, economical, and valid diagnostic instruments.

An interesting beginning towards such a development in criminology has been made by Eysenck and his collaborators. A general restatement of the theory can be found in Trasler, and earlier statements appear in Mowrer, for example. Bandura's rich production follows a social-learning approach, and his recent books with Walters provide a detailed discussion of mechanisms, patterns, and implications for the application of a behavioristic learning approach to analysis of personality development.

Indoctrination into a subculture can take place through early-infancy learning processes. However, not only does this indoctrination prove difficult to reconstruct in an individual diagnostic process, or impossible to demonstrate in the laboratory, but it is confused with individual differences. These differentials in the imitation and identification processes beg the central question of why equally exposed individuals terminally behave differently and exhibit values and norms that resist attempts to classify them into discrete, yet uniform categories. Eysenck has approached this problem through introduction of the concept of individual differences in conditioning, including, by extension, social conditioning. This approach assumes that, whereas introverts are easier to condition and therefore more readily absorb socialized values, extroverts are resistant to conditioning and dominated by anti-social impulsive reactions. The conceptualization can be extended to include social learning of whole antisocial value systems. These notions, if logically followed, would postulate two types of violent offender: (1) the introversive, who are socialized into a subculture of violence through conditioning, and are frequent in specific ecological settings; (2) the extroversive, impulsive, unsocialized types, who cut across social, cultural, and subcultural strata. Both types can exhibit violent behavior, but the etiology and the probability of such behavior vary along with basic psychological make-up, i.e., a set of inherited characteristics which, in Eysenck's terms, dichotomize individuals according to biological determinants that place them in a given position on the introversion-extroversion continuum. Only modest confirmation is so far available for this far-reaching conceptualization. An extension of the behavioristic learning theory into therapy has been proposed by Bandura and Walters and analyzed by several others. The advisability of granting scientific status to an approach which is still highly experimental has been seriously questioned.

Although the social-learning approach still awaits confirmation, it does provide a conceptually useful bridge between the sociological, the psychological, and clinical constructs which we have discussed in the preceding pages. It also furnishes us with the possibility of utilizing two other personality theories which have a definite place in the transposition of the concept of subculture from sociology to psychology. Dissonance theory, as one of these, constitutes an elegant, if unproved, link between the cognitive aspects of subcultural allegiance, the psychoanalytic mechanism of projection, and the internal consistency (with

consequent reduction of the anxiety level) which constitutes the differential characteristics of members of the subculture. No dissonance is experienced so long as the value system of the individual is not confronted by different or certainly conflicting values. The treatment implications of the concept of cognitive dissonance in relation to subculture allegiance are obvious, and point to the need to fragment and rearrange antisocial group alliances. The utilization of cognitive dissonance in this way in the prevention of international conflict has been advocated, for example, by Stagner and Osgood. Stagner has, however, carefully analyzed the importance of perceptual personality theory to individual and group aggression. A subculture allegiance entails an organization or reorganization of the process of personality formation as a process of learning to perceive objects, persons, and situations as attractive or threatening, in accordance with subcultural positive and negative valences.

The general psychological contributions from conditioning, learning theory, cognitive dissonance, perceptual personality theory, are indeed far from providing a total theoretical system as a counterpart to the sociological notions about subcultures. However, we are convinced that these behavioral constructs of social learning not only are the most directly related to subculture theory but also are capable of generating an integrated theory in criminology.

The Cultural Context

Like all human behavior, homicide and other violent assaultive crimes must be viewed in terms of the cultural context from which they spring. De Champneuf, Guerry, Quetelet early in the nineteenth century, and Durkheim later, led the way toward emphasizing the necessity to examine the *physique sociale,* or social phenomena characterized by "externality," if the scientist is to understand or interpret crime, suicide, prostitution, and other deviant behavior. Without promulgating a sociological fatalism, analysis of broad macroscopic correlates in this way may obscure the dynamic elements of the phenomenon and result in the empirical hiatus and fallacious association to which Selvin refers. Yet, because of wide individual variations, the clinical, idiosyncratic approach does not necessarily aid in arriving at Weber's *Verstehen,* or meaningful adequate understanding of regularities, uniformities, or patterns of interaction. And it is this kind of understanding we seek when we examine either deviation from, or conformity to, a normative social system.

Sociological contributions have made almost commonplace, since Durkheim, the fact that deviant conduct is not evenly distributed throughout the social structure. There is much empirical evidence that class position, ethnicity, occupational status, and other social variables are effective indicators for predicting rates of different kinds of deviance. Studies in ecology perform a valuable service for examining the phenomenology and distribution of aggression, but only inferentially point to the importance of the system of norms. Anomie, whether defined as the absence of norms (which is a doubtful conceptualization) or the conflict of norms (either normative goals or means), or whether redefined by Powell as 'meaninglessness,' does not coincide with most empirical evidence on homicide. Acceptance of the concept of anomie would imply that marginal individuals who harbor psychic anomie that reflects (or causes) social anomie have the highest rates of homicides. Available data seem to reject this contention. Anomie as culture conflict, or conflict of norms, suggests, as we have in the last section, that there is one segment (the prevailing middle-class value system) of a given culture whose value system is the antithesis of, or in conflict with, another, smaller segment of the same culture. This conceptualism of anomie is a useful tool for referring to subcultures as ideal types, or mental constructs. But to transfer this norm-conflict approach from the social to the individual level, theoretically making the individual a

repository of culture conflict, again does not conform to the patterns of known psychological and sociological data. This latter approach would be forced to hypothesize that socially mobile individuals and families would be most frequently involved in homicide, or that persons moving from a formerly embraced subvalue system to the predominant communal value system would commit this form of violent deviation in the greatest numbers. There are no homicide data that show high rates of homicides among persons manifesting higher social aspirations in terms of mobility. It should also be mentioned that anomie, as a concept, does not easily lend itself to psychological study.

That there is a conflict of value systems, we agree. That is, there is a conflict between a prevailing culture value and some subcultural entity. But commission of homicide by actors from the subculture at variance with the prevailing culture cannot be adequately explained in terms of frustration due to failure to attain normative-goals of the latter, in terms of inability to succeed with normative-procedures (means) for attaining those goals, nor in terms of an individual psychological condition of anomie. Homicide is most prevalent, or the highest rates of homicide occur, among a relatively homogeneous subcultural group in any large urban community. Similar prevalent rates can be found in some rural areas. The value system of this group, we are contending, constitutes a subculture of violence. From a psychological viewpoint, we might hypothesize that the greater the degree of integration of the individual into this subculture, the higher the probability that his behavior will be violent in a variety of situations. From the sociological side, there should be a direct relationship between rates of homicide and the extent to which the subculture of violence represents a cluster of values around the theme of violence.

Except for war, probably the most highly reportable, socially visible, and serious form of violence is expressed in criminal homicide. Data show that in the United States rates are highest among males, non-whites, and the young adult ages. Rates for most serious crimes, particularly against the person, are highest in these same groups. In a Philadelphia study of 588 criminal homicides, for example, non-white males aged 20–24 had a rate of 92 per 100,000 compared with 3:4 [3.4] for whites males of the same ages. Females consistently had lower rates than males in their respective race groups (non-white females, 9:3 [9.3]; white females, 0:4 [0.4], in the same study), although it should be . . . that non-white females have higher rates than white males.

It is possible to multiply these specific findings in any variety of ways; and although a subcultural affinity to violence appears to be principally present in large urban communities and increasingly in the adolescent population, some typical evidence of this phenomenon can be found, for example, in rural areas and among other adult groups. For example, a particular, very structured, subculture of this kind can be found in Sardinia, in the central mountain area of the island. Pigliaru has conducted a brilliant analysis of the people from this area and of their criminal behavior, commonly known as the *vendetta barbaricina*. . . .

. . . . We suggest that, by identifying the groups with the highest rates of homicide, we should find in the most intense degree a subculture of violence; and, having focused on these groups, we should subsequently examine the value system of their subculture, the importance of human life in the scale of values, the kinds of expected reaction to certain types of stimulus, perceptual differences in the evaluation of stimuli, and the general personality structure of the subcultural actors. In the Philadelphia study it was pointed out that:

> the significance of a jostle, a slightly derogatory remark, or the appearance of a weapon in the hands of an adversary are stimuli differentially perceived and interpreted by Negroes and whites,

> males and females. Social expectations of response in particular types of social interaction result in differential "definitions of the situation." A male is usually expected to defend the name and honor of his mother, the virtue of womanhood . . . and to accept no derogation about his race (even from a member of his own race), his age, or his masculinity. Quick resort to physical combat as a measure of daring, courage, or defense of status appears to be a cultural expression, especially for lower socio-economic class males of both races. When such a culture norm response is elicited from an individual engaged in social interplay with others who harbor the same response mechanism, physical assaults, altercations, and violent domestic quarrels that result in homicide are likely to be common. The upper-middle and upper social class value system defines subcultural mores, and considers many of the social and personal stimuli that evoke a combative reaction in the lower classes as "trivial." Thus, there exists a cultural antipathy between many folk rationalizations of the lower class, and of males of both races, on the one hand, and the middle-class legal norms under which they live, on the other.

This kind of analysis, combined with other data about delinquency, lower-class social structure, its value system, and its emphasis on aggression, suggest the thesis of a violent subculture, or, by pushing the normative aspects a little further, a *subculture of* violence. Among many juvenile gangs, as has repeatedly been pointed out, there are violent feuds, meetings, territorial fights, and the use of violence to prove "heart," to maintain or to acquire "rep."

Physical aggression is often seen as a demonstration of masculinity and toughness. We might argue that this emphasis on showing masculinity through aggression is not always supported by data. If homicide is any index at all of physical aggression, we must remember that in the Philadelphia data non-white females have [homicide] rates often two to four times higher than the rates of white males. Violent behavior appears more dependent on cultural differences than on sex differences, traditionally considered of paramount importance in the expression of aggression. . . .

. . . . It appears valid to suggest that there are, in a heterogeneous population, differences in ideas and attitudes toward the use of violence and that these differences can be observed through variables related to social class and possibly through psychological correlates. There is evidence that modes of control of expressions of aggression in children vary among the social classes. Lower-class boys, for example, appear more likely to be oriented toward direct expression of aggression than are middle-class boys. The type of punishment meted out by parents to misbehaving children is related to this class orientation toward aggression. Lower-class mothers report that they or their husbands are likely to strike their children or threaten to strike them, whereas middle-class mothers report that their type of punishment is psychological rather than physical; and boys who are physically [punished] express aggression more directly than those who are punished psychologically. As Martin has suggested, the middle-class child is more likely to turn his aggression inward; in the extreme and as an adult he will commit suicide. But the lower-class child is more accustomed to a parent-child relationship which during punishment is for the moment that of attacker and attacked. The target for aggression, then, is external; aggression is directed toward others.

The existence of a subculture of violence is partly demonstrated by examination of the social groups and individuals who experience the highest rates of manifest violence. This examination need not be confined to the study of one national or ethnic group. On the contrary, the existence of

a subculture of violence could perhaps receive even cross-cultural confirmation. Criminal homicide is the most acute and highly reportable example of this type of violence, but some circularity of thought is obvious in the effort to specify the dependent variable (homicide), and also to infer the independent variable (the existence of a subculture of violence). The highest rates of rape, aggravated assaults, persistency in arrests for assaults (recidivism) among these groups with high rates of homicide are, however, empirical addenda to the postulation of a subculture of violence. Residential propinquity of these same groups reinforces the socio-psychological impact which the integration of this subculture engenders. Sutherland's thesis of "differential association," or a psychological reformulation of the same theory in terms of learning process, could effectively be employed to describe more fully this impact in its intensity, duration, repetition, and frequency. The more thoroughly integrated the individual is into this subculture, the more intensely he embraces its prescriptions of behavior, its conduct norms, and integrates them into his personality structure. The degree of integration may be measured partly and crudely by public records of contact with law, so high arrest rates, particularly high rates of assault crimes and rates of recidivism for assault crimes among groups that form the culture of violence, may indicate allegiance to the values of violence.

We have said that overt physical violence often becomes a common subculturally expected response to certain stimuli. However, it is not merely rigid conformity to the demands and expectations of other persons, as Henry and Short seem to suggest, that results in the high probability of homicide. Excessive, compulsive, or apathetic conformity [of] middle-class individuals to the value system of their social group is a widely recognized cultural malady. Our concern is with the value elements of violence as an integral component of the subculture which experiences high rates of homicide. It is conformity to *this* set of values, and not rigid conformity *per se*, that gives important meaning to the subculture of violence. . . .

It is not far-fetched to suggest that a whole culture may accept a value set dependent upon violence, demand or encourage adherence to violence, and penalize deviation. . . . Homicide, it appears, is often a situation not unlike that of confrontations in wartime combat, in which two individuals committed to the value of violence come together, and in which chance, prowess, or possession of a particular weapon dictates the identity of the slayer and of the slain. The peaceful non-combatant in both sets of circumstances is penalized, because of the allelomimetic behavior of the group supporting violence, by his being ostracized as an outgroup member, and he is thereby segregated (imprisoned, in wartime, as a conscientious objector) from his original group. If he is not segregated, but continues to interact with his original group in the public street or on the front line that represents the culture of violence, he may fall victim to the shot or stab from one of the group who still embraces the value of violence. . . .

. . . . We have said that overt use of force or violence, either in interpersonal relationships or in group interaction, is generally viewed as a reflection of basic values that stand apart from the dominant, the central, or the parent culture. Our hypothesis is that this overt . . . (and often illicit) expression of violence (of which homicide is only the most extreme) is part of a subcultural normative system, and that this system is reflected in the psychological traits of the subculture participants. In the light of our discussion of the caution to be exercised in interpretative analysis, in order to tighten the logic of this analysis, and to support the thesis of a subculture of violence, we offer the following corollary propositions:

1. *No subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society of which it is a part.* A subculture of violence is not entirely an expression of violence, for there must be interlocking value elements shared with the dominant culture. . . .

2. *To establish the existence of a subculture of violence does not require that the actors sharing in these basic value elements should express violence in all situations.* The normative system designates that in some types of social interaction a violent and physically aggressive response is either expected or required of all members sharing in that system of values. . . .

3. *The potential resort or willingness to resort to violence in a variety of situations emphasizes the penetrating and diffusive character of this culture theme.* The number and kinds of situations in which an individual uses violence may be viewed as an index of the extent to which he has assimilated the values associated with violence. . . .

4. *The subcultural ethos of violence may be shared by all ages in a sub-society, but this ethos is most prominent in a limited age group, ranging from late adolescence to middle age.* . . . [T]he known empirical distribution of conduct, which expresses the sharing of this violence theme, shows greatest localization, incidence, and frequency in limited sub-groups and reflects differences in learning about violence as a problem-solving mechanism.

5. *The counter-norm is nonviolence.* Violation of expected and required violence is most likely to result in ostracism from the group. . . .

6. The development of favorable attitudes toward, and the use of, violence in a subculture usually involve learned behavior and a process of differential learning, association, or identification. Not all persons exposed—even equally exposed—to the presence of a subculture of violence absorb and share in the values in equal portions. Differential personality variables must be considered in an integrated social-psychological approach to an understanding of the subcultural aspects of violence. . . .

7. The use of violence in a subculture is not necessarily viewed as illicit conduct and the users therefore do not have to deal with feelings of guilt about their aggression. Violence can become a part of the life style, the theme of solving difficult problems or problem situations. . . . [W]hen the attacked see their assaulters as agents of the same kind of aggression they themselves represent, violent retaliation is readily legitimized by a situationally specific rationale, as well as by the generally normative supports for violence. . . .

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do Wolfgang and Ferracuti claim regarding two categories of homicide? What do they say regarding these two types of homicide (e.g., what percentage of homicides does each category make up of in the total), and why?
2. What do the authors conclude regarding the social learning and conditioning of homicides in the subculture of violence?
3. What do Wolfgang and Ferracuti claim regarding the cultural context of this subculture of violence?
4. The authors provide seven conclusions in this selection. Which conclusion do you most agree with and why? Which conclusion do you most disagree with and why?

READING

In this selection, Anderson presents a cultural/subcultural theory of the inner-city "ghetto poor." He presents a model that emphasizes the interpersonal aggression of such individuals, in which the main factor of the code is respect. An individual must maintain this respect, at all costs, even if it means resorting to lethal violence to maintain such status, especially if the individual has been "dissed" in public. Anderson goes further in this selection by identifying both "decent" and "street" families, which provides more insight into the environment and culture of inner-city youths. Anderson also provides some insightful examples regarding the way that individuals try (or campaign) for respect in their communities. Ultimately, it is about being seen as a "man" among their peers, and acquiring such "manhood" is seen as vitally important among this group.

The Code of the Streets

Elijah Anderson

Of all the problems besetting the poor inner-city black community, none is more pressing than that of interpersonal violence and aggression. It wreaks havoc daily with the lives of community residents and increasingly spills over into downtown and residential middle-class areas. Muggings, burglaries, carjackings, and drug-related shootings, all of which may leave their victims or innocent bystanders dead, are now common enough to concern all urban and many suburban residents. The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor—the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, the stigma of race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and lack of hope for the future.

Simply living in such an environment places young people at special risk of falling victim to aggressive behavior. Although there are often forces in the community which can counteract the negative influences, by far the most powerful being a strong, loving, "decent" (as inner-city residents put it) family committed to middle-class values, the despair is pervasive enough to have spawned an oppositional culture, that of "the streets," whose norms are often consciously opposed to those of mainstream society. These two orientations—decent and street—socially organize the community, and their coexistence has important consequences for residents, particularly children growing up in the inner city. Above all, this environment means that even youngsters whose home lives reflect mainstream values—and the majority of homes in the community do—must be able to handle themselves in a street-oriented environment.

This is because the street culture has evolved what may be called a code of the

Source: Elijah Anderson, *The Code of the Streets: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999). Copyright © 1999 by Elijah Anderson. Reprinted by permission of W.W. Norton & Company.

streets, which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence. The rules prescribe both a proper comportment and a proper way to respond if challenged. They regulate the use of violence and so allow those who are inclined to aggression to precipitate violent encounters in an approved way. The rules have been established and are enforced mainly by the street-oriented, but on the streets the distinction between street and decent is often irrelevant; everybody knows that if the rules are violated, there are penalties. Knowledge of the code is thus largely defensive; it is literally necessary for operating in public. Therefore, even though families with a decency orientation are usually opposed to the values of the code, they often reluctantly encourage their children's familiarity with it to enable them to negotiate the inner-city environment.

At the heart of the code is the issue of respect—loosely defined as being treated "right," or granted the deference one deserves. However, in the troublesome public environment of the inner city, as people increasingly feel buffeted by forces beyond their control, what one deserves in the way of respect becomes more and more problematic and uncertain. This in turn further opens the issue of respect to sometimes intense interpersonal negotiation. In the street culture, especially among young people, respect is viewed as almost an external entity that is hard-won but easily lost, and so must constantly be guarded. The rules of the code in fact provide a framework for negotiating respect. The person whose very appearance—including his clothing, demeanor, and way of moving—deters transgressions feels that he possesses, and may be considered by others to possess, a measure of respect. With the right amount of respect, for instance, he can avoid "being bothered" in public. If he is bothered, not only may he be in physical danger but he has been disgraced or "dissed" (disrespected). Many of the forms that dissing can take might seem petty to middle-class people (maintaining eye contact for too long, for example), but to those invested in the street code, these actions become serious indications of the other person's intentions. Consequently, such people become very sensitive to advances and slights, which could well serve as warnings of imminent physical confrontation.

This hard reality can be traced to the profound sense of alienation from mainstream society and its institutions felt by many poor inner-city black people, particularly the young. The code of the streets is actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. The police are most often seen as representing the dominant white society and not caring to protect inner-city residents. When called, they may not respond, which is one reason many residents feel they must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to defend themselves and their loved ones against those who are inclined to aggression. Lack of police accountability has in fact been incorporated into the status system: the person who is believed capable of "taking care of himself" is accorded a certain deference, which translates into a sense of physical and psychological control. Thus the street code emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin. Exacerbated by the proliferation of drugs and easy access to guns, this volatile situation results in the ability of the street-oriented minority (or those who effectively "go for bad") to dominate the public spaces.

Decent and Street Families

Although almost everyone in poor inner-city neighborhoods is struggling financially and therefore feels a certain distance from the rest of America, the decent and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories. The labels "decent" and "street," which the residents themselves use, amount to evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents.

The labeling is often the result of a social contest among individuals and families of the neighborhood. Individuals of the two orientations often coexist in the same extended family. Decent residents judge themselves to be so while judging others to be of the street, and street individuals often present themselves as decent, drawing distinctions between themselves and other people. In addition, there is quite a bit of circumstantial behavior—that is, one person may at different times exhibit both decent and street orientations, depending on the circumstances. Although these designations result from so much social jockeying, there do exist concrete features that define each conceptual category.

Generally, so-called decent families tend to accept mainstream values more fully and attempt to instill them in their children. Whether married couples with children or single-parent (usually female) households, they are generally "working poor" and so tend to be better off financially than their street-oriented neighbors. They value hard work and self-reliance and are willing to sacrifice for their children. Because they have a certain amount of faith in mainstream society, they harbor hopes for a better future for their children, if not for themselves. Many of them go to church and take a strong interest in their children's schooling. Rather than dwelling on the real hardships and inequities facing them, many such decent people, particularly the increasing number of grandmothers raising grandchildren, see their difficult situation as a test from God and derive great support from their faith and from the church community.

Extremely aware of the problematic and often dangerous environment in which they reside, decent parents tend to be strict in their child-rearing practices, encouraging children to respect authority and walk a straight moral line. They have an almost obsessive concern about trouble of any kind and remind their children to be on the lookout for people and situations that might lead to it. At the same time, they are themselves polite and considerate of others, and teach their children to be the same way. At home, at work, and in church, they strive hard to maintain a positive mental attitude and a spirit of cooperation.

So-called street parents, in contrast, often show a lack of consideration for other people and have a rather superficial sense of family and community. Though they may love their children, many of them are unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands of parenthood, and find it difficult to reconcile their needs with those of their children. These families, who are more fully invested in the code of the streets than the decent people are, may aggressively socialize their children into it in a normative way. They believe in the code and judge themselves and others according to its values.

In fact the overwhelming majority of families in the inner-city community try to approximate the decent-family model, but there are many others who clearly represent the worst fears of the decent family. Not only are their financial resources extremely limited, but what little they have may easily be misused. The lives of the street-oriented are often marked by disorganization. In the most desperate circumstances people frequently have a limited understanding of priorities and consequences, and so frustrations mount over bills, food, and, at times, drink, cigarettes, and drugs. Some tend toward self-destructive behavior; many street-oriented women are crack-addicted ("on the pipe"), alcoholic, or involved in complicated relationships with men who abuse them. In addition, the seeming intractability of their situation, caused in large part by the lack of well-paying jobs and the persistence of racial discrimination, has engendered deep-seated bitterness and anger in many of the most desperate and poorest blacks, especially young people. The need both to exercise a measure of control and to lash out at somebody is often reflected in the adults' relations with their children. At the least, the frustrations of persistent poverty shorten the fuse in such

people—contributing to a lack of patience with anyone, child or adult, who irritates them.

In these circumstances a woman—or a man, although men are less consistently present in children's lives—can be quite aggressive with children, yelling at and striking them for the least little infraction of the rules she has set down. Often little if any serious explanation follows the verbal and physical punishment. This response teaches children a particular lesson. They learn that to solve any kind of interpersonal problem one must quickly resort to hitting or other violent behavior. Actual peace and quiet, and also the appearance of calm, respectful children conveyed to her neighbors and friends, are often what the young mother most desires, but at times she will be very aggressive in trying to get them. Thus she may be quick to beat her children, especially if they defy her law, not because she hates them but because this is the way she knows to control them. In fact, many street-oriented women love their children dearly. Many mothers in the community subscribe to the notion that there is a "devil in the boy" that must be beaten out of him or that socially "fast girls need to be whupped." Thus, much of what borders on child abuse in the view of social authorities is acceptable parental punishment in the view of these mothers.

Many street-oriented women are sporadic mothers whose children learn to fend for themselves when necessary, foraging for food and money any way they can get it. The children are sometimes employed by drug dealers or become addicted themselves. These children of the street, growing up with little supervision, are said to "come up hard." They often learn to fight at an early age, sometimes using short-tempered adults around them as role models. The street-oriented home may be fraught with anger, verbal disputes, physical aggression, and even mayhem. The children observe these goings-on, learning the lesson that might makes right. They quickly learn to hit those who cross them, and the dog-eat-dog mentality prevails. In order to survive, to protect oneself, it is necessary to marshal inner resources and be ready to deal with adversity in a hands-on way. In these circumstances physical prowess takes on great significance.

In some of the most desperate cases, a street-oriented mother may simply leave her young children alone and unattended while she goes out. The most irresponsible women can be found at local bars and crack houses, getting high and socializing with other adults. Sometimes a troubled woman will leave very young children alone for days at a time. Reports of crack addicts abandoning their children have become common in drug-infested inner-city communities. Neighbors or relatives discover the abandoned children, often hungry and distraught over the absence of their mother. After repeated absences, a friend or relative, particularly a grandmother, will often step in to care for the young children, sometimes petitioning the authorities to send her, as guardian of the children, the mother's welfare check, if the mother gets one. By this time, however, the children may well have learned the first lesson of the streets: survival itself, let alone respect, cannot be taken for granted; you have to fight for your place in the world.

Campaigning for Respect

These realities of inner-city life are largely absorbed on the streets. At an early age, often even before they start school, children from street-oriented homes gravitate to the streets, where they "hang"—socialize with their peers. Children from these generally permissive homes have a great deal of latitude and are allowed to "rip and run" up and down the street. They often come home from school, put their books down, and go right back out the door. On school nights eight- and nine-year-olds remain out until nine or ten o'clock (and teenagers typically come in whenever they

want to). On the streets they play in groups that often become the source of their primary social bonds. Children from decent homes tend to be more carefully supervised and are thus likely to have curfews and to be taught how to stay out of trouble.

When decent and street kids come together, a kind of social shuffle occurs in which children have a chance to go either way. Tension builds as a child comes to realize that he must choose an orientation. The kind of home he comes from influences but does not determine the way he will ultimately turn out—although it is unlikely that a child from a thoroughly street-oriented family will easily absorb decent values on the streets. Youths who emerge from street-oriented families but develop a decency orientation almost always learn those values in another setting—in school, in a youth group, in church. Often it is the result of their involvement with a caring "old head" (adult role model).

In the street, through their play, children pour their individual life experiences into a common knowledge pool, affirming, confirming, and elaborating on what they have observed in the home and matching their skills against those of others. And they learn to fight. Even small children test one another, pushing and shoving, and are ready to hit other children over circumstances not to their liking. In turn, they are readily hit by other children, and the child who is toughest prevails. Thus the violent resolution of disputes, the hitting and cursing, gains social reinforcement. The child in effect is initiated into a system that is really a way of campaigning for respect.

In addition, younger children witness the disputes of older children, which are often resolved through cursing and abusive talk, if not aggression or outright violence. They see that one child succumbs to the greater physical and mental abilities of the other. They are also alert and attentive witnesses to the verbal and physical fights of adults, after which they compare notes and share their interpretations of the event. In almost every case the victor is the person who physically won the altercation, and this person often enjoys the esteem and respect of onlookers. These experiences reinforce the lessons the children have learned at home: might makes right, and toughness is a virtue, while humility is not. In effect they learn the social meaning of fighting. When it is left virtually unchallenged, this understanding becomes an ever more important part of the child's working conception of the world. Over time the code of the streets becomes refined.

Those street-oriented adults with whom children come in contact—including mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, boyfriends, cousins, neighbors, and friends—help them along in forming this understanding by verbalizing the messages they are getting through experience: "Watch your back." "Protect yourself." "Don't punk out." "If somebody messes with you, you got to pay them back." "If someone disses you, you got to straighten them out." Many parents actually impose sanctions if a child is not sufficiently aggressive. For example, if a child loses a fight and comes home upset, the parent might respond, "Don't you come in here crying that somebody beat you up; you better get back out there and whup his ass. I didn't raise no punks! Get back out there and whup his ass. If you don't whup his ass, I'll whup your ass when you come home." Thus, the child obtains reinforcement for being tough and showing nerve.

While fighting, some children cry as though they are doing something they are ambivalent about. The fight may be against their wishes, yet they may feel constrained to fight or face the consequences—not just from peers but also from caretakers or parents, who may administer another beating if they back down. Some adults recall receiving such lessons from their own parents and justify repeating them to their children as a way to toughen them up. Looking capable of taking care of oneself as a form of self defense is a dominant theme among both street-oriented and decent adults who worry about the safety of their

children. There is thus at times a convergence in their child-rearing practices, although the rationales behind them may differ.

Self-Image Based on "Juice"

By the time they are teenagers, most youths have either internalized the code of the streets or at least learned the need to comport themselves in accordance with its rules, which chiefly have to do with interpersonal communication. The code revolves around the presentation of self. Its basic requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence. Accordingly, one's bearing must send the unmistakable, if sometimes subtle, message to "the next person" in public that one is capable of violence and mayhem when the situation requires it, that one can take care of oneself. The nature of this communication is largely determined by the demands of the circumstances but can include facial expressions, gait, and verbal expressions—all of which are geared mainly to deterring aggression. Physical appearance, including clothes, jewelry, and grooming, also plays an important part in how a person is viewed; to be respected, it is important to have the right look.

Even so, there are no guarantees against challenges, because there are always people around looking for a fight to increase their share of respect—or "juice," as it is sometimes called on the street. Moreover, if a person is assaulted, it is important, not only in the eyes of his opponent but also in the eyes of his "running buddies," for him to avenge himself. Otherwise he risks being "tried" (challenged) or "moved on" by any number of others. To maintain his honor he must show he is not someone to be "messed with" or "dissed." In general, the person must "keep himself straight" by managing his position of respect among others; this involves in part his self-image, which is shaped by what he thinks others are thinking of him in relation to his peers.

Objects play an important and complicated role in establishing self-image. Jackets, sneakers, gold jewelry reflect not just a person's taste, which tends to be tightly regulated among adolescents of all social classes, but also a willingness to possess things that may require defending. A boy wearing a fashionable, expensive jacket, for example, is vulnerable to attack by another who covets the jacket and either cannot afford to buy one or wants the added satisfaction of depriving someone else of his. However, if they boy forgoes the desirable jacket and wears one that isn't "hip," he runs the risk of being teased and possibly even assaulted as an unworthy person. To be allowed to hang with certain prestigious crowds, a boy must wear a different set of expensive clothes—sneakers and athletic suit—every day. Not to be able to do so might make him appear socially deficient. The youth comes to covet such items—especially when he sees easy prey wearing them.

In acquiring valued things, therefore, a person shores up his identity—but since it is an identity based on having things, it is highly precarious. This very precariousness gives a heightened sense of urgency to staying even with peers, with whom the person is actually competing. Young men and women who are able to command respect through their presentation of self—by allowing their possessions and their body language to speak for them—may not have to campaign for regard but may, rather, gain it by the force of their manner. Those who are unable to command respect in this way must actively campaign for it—and are thus particularly alive to slights.

One way of campaigning for status is by taking the possessions of others. In this context, seemingly ordinary objects can become trophies imbued with symbolic value that far exceeds their monetary worth. Possession of the trophy can symbolize the ability to violate somebody—to "get in his face," to take something of value from him, to "dis" him, and thus to enhance one's own worth by stealing someone else's. The

trophy does not have to be something material. It can be another person's sense of honor, snatched away with a derogatory remark. It can be the outcome of a fight. It can be the imposition of a certain standard, such as a girl's getting herself recognized as the most beautiful. Material things, however, fit easily into the pattern. Sneakers, a pistol, even somebody else's girlfriend, can become a trophy. When a person can take something from another and then flaunt it, he gains a certain regard by being the owner, or the controller, of that thing. But this display of ownership can then provoke other people to challenge him. This game of who controls what is thus constantly being played out on inner-city streets, and the trophy—extrinsic or intrinsic, tangible or intangible—identifies the current winner.

An important aspect of this often violent give-and-take is its zero-sum quality. That is, the extent to which one person can raise himself up depends on his ability to put another person down. This underscores the alienation that permeates the inner-city ghetto community. There is a generalized sense that very little respect is to be had, and therefore everyone competes to get what affirmation he can of the little that is available. The craving for respect that results gives people thin skins. Shows of deference by others can be highly soothing, contributing to a sense of security, comfort, self-confidence, and self-respect. Transgressions by others which go unanswered diminish these feelings and are believed to encourage further transgressions. Hence one must be ever vigilant against the transgressions of others or even *appearing* as if transgressions will be tolerated. Among young people, whose sense of self-esteem is particularly vulnerable, there is an especially heightened concern with being disrespected. Many inner-city young men in particular crave respect to such a degree that they will risk their lives to attain and maintain it.

The issue of respect is thus closely tied to whether a person has an inclination to be violent, even as a victim. In the wider society people may not feel required to retaliate physically after an attack, even though they are aware that they have been degraded or taken advantage of. They may feel a great need to defend themselves *during* an attack, or to behave in such a way as to deter aggression (middle-class people certainly can and do become victims of street-oriented youths), but they are much more likely than street-oriented people to feel that they can walk away from a possible altercation with their self-esteem intact. Some people may even have the strength of character to flee, without any thought that their self-respect or esteem will be diminished.

In impoverished inner-city black communities, however, particularly among young males and perhaps increasingly among females, such flight would be extremely difficult. To run away would likely leave one's self-esteem in tatters. Hence people often feel constrained not only to stand up and at least attempt to resist during an assault but also to "pay back"—to seek revenge—after a successful assault on their person. This may include going to get a weapon or even getting relatives involved. Their very identity and self-respect, their honor, is often intricately tied up with the way they perform on the streets during and after such encounters. This outlook reflects the circumscribed opportunities of the inner-city poor. Generally people outside the ghetto have other ways of gaining status and regard, and thus do not feel so dependent on such physical displays.

By Trial of Manhood

On the street, among males these concerns about things and identity have come to be expressed in the concept of "manhood." Manhood in the inner city means taking the prerogatives of men with respect to strangers, other men, and women—being distinguished as a man. It implies physicality and a certain ruthlessness. Regard and respect are associated

with this concept in large part because of its practical application: if others have little or no regard for a person's manhood, his very life and those of this loved ones could be in jeopardy. But there is a chicken-and-egg aspect to this situation: one's physical safety is more likely to be jeopardized in public because manhood is associated with respect. In other words, an existential link has been created between the idea of manhood and one's self-esteem, so that it has become hard to say which is primary. For many inner-city youths, manhood and respect are flip sides of the same coin; physical and psychological well-being are inseparable, and both require a sense of control, of being in charge.

The operating assumption is that a man, especially a real man, knows what other men know—the code of the streets. And if one is not a real man, one is somehow diminished as a person, and there are certain valued things one simply does not deserve. There is thus believed to be a certain justice to the code, since it is considered that everyone has the opportunity to know it. Implicit in this is that everybody is held responsible for being familiar with the code. If the victim of a mugging, for example, does not know the code and so responds "wrong," the perpetrator may feel justified even in killing him and may feel no remorse. He may think, "Too bad, but it's his fault. He should have known better."

So when a person ventures outside, he must adopt the code—a kind of shield, really—to prevent others from "messing with" him. In these circumstances it is easy for people to think they are being tried or tested by others even when this is not the case. For it is sensed that something extremely valuable is at stake in every interaction, and people are encouraged to rise to the occasion, particularly with strangers. For people who are unfamiliar with the code— generally people who live outside the inner city—the concern with respect in the most ordinary interactions can be frightening and incomprehensible. But for those who are invested in the code, the clear object of their demeanor is to discourage strangers from even thinking about testing their manhood. And the sense of power that attends the ability to deter others can be alluring even to those who know the code without being heavily invested in it—the decent inner-city youths. Thus a boy who has been leading a basically decent life can, in trying circumstances, suddenly resort to deadly force.

Central to the issue of manhood is the widespread belief that one of the most effective ways of gaining respect is to manifest "nerve." Nerve is shown when one takes another person's possessions (the more valuable the better), "messes with" someone's woman, throws the first punch, "gets in someone's face," or pulls a trigger. Its proper display helps on the spot to check others who would violate one's person and also helps to build a reputation that works to prevent future challenges. But since such a show of nerve is a forceful expression of disrespect toward the person on the receiving end, the victim may be greatly offended and seek to retaliate with equal or greater force. A display of nerve, therefore, can easily provoke a life-threatening response, and the background knowledge of that possibility has often been incorporated into the concept of nerve.

True nerve exposes a lack of fear of dying. Many feel that it is acceptable to risk dying over the principle of respect. In fact, among the hard-core street-oriented, the clear risk of violent death may be preferable to being "dissed" by another. The youths who have internalized this attitude and convincingly display it in their public bearing are among the most threatening people of all, for it is commonly assumed that they fear no man. As the people of the community say, "They are the baddest dudes on the street." They often lead an existential life that may acquire meaning only when they are faced with the possibility of imminent death. Not to be afraid to die is by implication to have few compunctions about

taking another's life. Not to be afraid to die is the quid pro quo of being able to take somebody else's life—for the right reasons, if the situation demands it. When others believe this is one's position, it gives one a real sense of power on the streets. Such credibility is what many inner-city youths strive to achieve, whether they are decent or street-oriented, both because of its practical defensive value and because of the positive way it makes them feel about themselves. The difference between the decent and the street-oriented youth is often that the decent youth makes a conscious decision to appear tough and manly; in another setting—with teachers, say, or at his part-time job—he can be polite and deferential. The street-oriented youth, on the other hand, has made the concept of manhood a part of his very identity; he has difficulty manipulating it—it often controls him.

Girls and Boys

Increasingly, teenage girls are mimicking the boys and trying to have their own version of "manhood." Their goal is the same—to get respect, to be recognized as capable of setting or maintaining a certain standard. They try to achieve this end in the ways that have been established by the boys, including posturing, abusive language, and the use of violence to resolve disputes, but the issues for the girls are different. Although conflicts over turf and status exist among the girls, the majority of disputes seem rooted in assessments of beauty (which girl in a group is "the cutest"), competition over boyfriends, and attempts to regulate other people's knowledge of and opinions about a girl's behavior or that of someone close to her, especially her mother.

A major cause of conflicts among girls is "he say, she say." This practice begins in the early school years and continues through high school. It occurs when "people," particularly girls, talk about others, thus putting their "business in the streets." Usually one girl will say something negative about another in the group, most often behind the person's back. The remark will then get back to the person talked about. She may retaliate or her friends may feel required to "take up for" her. In essence this is a form of group gossiping in which individuals are negatively assessed and evaluated. As with much gossip, the things said may or may not be true, but the point is that such imputations can cast aspersions on a person's good name. The accused is required to defend herself against the slander, which can result in arguments and fights, often over little of real substance. Here again is the problem of low self-esteem, which encourages youngsters to be highly sensitive to slights and to be vulnerable to feeling easily "dissed." To avenge the dissing, a fight is usually necessary.

Because boys are believed to control violence, girls tend to defer to them in situations of conflict. Often if a girl is attacked or feels slighted, she will get a brother, uncle, or cousin to do her fighting for her. Increasingly, however, girls are doing their own fighting and are even asking their male relatives to teach them how to fight. Some girls form groups that attack other girls or take things from them. A hard-core segment of inner-city girls inclined toward violence seems to be developing. As one thirteen-year-old girl in a detention center for youths who have committed violent acts told me, "To get people to leave you alone, you gotta fight. Talking don't always get you out of stuff." One major difference between girls and boys: girls rarely use guns. Their fights are therefore not life-or-death struggles. Girls are not often willing to put their lives on the line for "manhood." The ultimate form of respect on the male-dominated inner-city street is thus reserved for men.

"Going for Bad"

In the most fearsome youths, such a cavalier attitude toward death grows out of a very

limited view of life. Many are uncertain about how long they are going to live and believe they could die violently at any time. They accept this fate; they live on the edge. Their manner conveys the message that nothing intimidates them; whatever turn the encounter takes, they maintain their attack—rather like a pit bull, whose spirit many such boys admire. The demonstration of such tenacity "shows heart" and earns their respect.

This fearlessness has implications for law enforcement. Many street-oriented boys are much more concerned about the threat of "justice" at the hands of a peer than at the hands of the police. Moreover, many feel not only that they have little to lose by going to prison but that they have something to gain. The toughening-up one experiences in prison can actually enhance one's reputation on the streets. Hence the system loses influence over the hard core who are without jobs, with little perceptible stake in the system. If mainstream society has done nothing *for* them, they counter by making sure it can do nothing *to* them.

At the same time, however, a competing view maintains that true nerve consists in backing down, walking away from a fight, and going on with one's business. One fights only in self-defense. This view emerges from the decent philosophy that life is precious, and it is an important part of the socialization process common in decent homes. It discourages violence as the primary means of resolving disputes and encourages youngsters to accept nonviolence and talk as confrontational strategies. But "if the deal goes down," self-defense is greatly encouraged. When there is enough positive support for this orientation, either in the home or among one's peers, then nonviolence has a chance to prevail. But it prevails at the cost of relinquishing a claim to being bad and tough, and therefore sets a young person up as, at the very least, alienated from street-oriented peers and quite possibly a target of derision or even violence.

Although the nonviolent orientation rarely overcomes the impulse to strike back in an encounter, it does introduce a certain confusion, and so can prompt a measure of soul-searching, or even profound ambivalence. Did the person back down with his respect intact or did he back down only to be judged a "punk"—a person lacking manhood? Should he or she have acted? Should he or she have hit the other person in the mouth? These questions beset many young men and women during public confrontations. What is the "right" thing to do? In the quest for honor, respect, and local status—which few young people are uninterested in—common sense most often prevails, which leads many to opt for the tough approach, enacting their own particular versions of the display of nerve. The presentation of oneself as rough and tough is very often quite acceptable until one is tested. And then that presentation may help the person pass the test, because it will cause fewer questions to be asked about what he did and why. It is hard for a person to explain why he lost the fight or why he backed down. Hence many will strive to appear to "go for bad," while hoping they will never be tested. But when they are tested, the outcome of the situation may quickly be out of their hands, as they become wrapped up in the circumstances of the moment.

An Oppositional Culture

The attitudes of the wider society are deeply implicated in the code of the streets. Most people in inner-city communities are not totally invested in the code, but the significant minority of hard-core street youths who are have to maintain the code in order to establish reputations, because they have—or feel they have—few other ways to assert themselves. For these young people the standards of the street code are the only game in town. The extent to which some children—particularly those who through upbringing have become most alienated and

those lacking in strong and conventional social support—experience, feel, and internalize racist rejection and contempt from mainstream society may strongly encourage them to express contempt for the more conventional society in turn. In dealing with this contempt and rejection, some youngsters will consciously invest themselves and their considerable mental resources in what amounts to an oppositional culture to preserve themselves and their self-respect. Once they do, any respect they might be able to garner in the wider system pales in comparison with the respect available in the local system; thus they often lose interest in even attempting to negotiate the mainstream system.

At the same time, many less alienated young blacks have assumed a street-oriented demeanor as a way of expressing their blackness while really embracing a much more moderate way of life; they, too, want a nonviolent setting in which to live and raise a family. These decent people are trying hard to be part of the mainstream culture, but the racism, real and perceived, that they encounter helps to legitimate the oppositional culture. And so on occasion they adopt street behavior. In fact, depending on the demands of the situation, many people in the community slip back and forth between decent and street behavior.

A vicious cycle has thus been formed. The hopelessness and alienation many young inner-city black men and women feel, largely as a result of endemic joblessness and persistent racism, fuels the violence they engage in. This violence serves to confirm the negative feelings many whites and some middle-class blacks harbor toward the ghetto poor, further legitimating the oppositional culture and the code of the streets in the eyes of many poor young blacks. Unless this cycle is broken, attitudes on both sides will become increasingly entrenched, and the violence, which claims victims, black and white, poor and affluent, will only escalate.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What type of individuals is Anderson discussing? Do you personally know any individuals who fit this description?
2. Which of Anderson's explanations do you find most credible? Which portions do you find least credible?
3. Given that Anderson's description is valid for inner-city, urban youth, to what extent do you feel that this explains crime rates in the United States? Which significant portion do you feel that this model does not cover?