

Explaining Criminals and Crime

*Essays in Contemporary
Criminological Theory*

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The Ecology of Crime, Fear, and Delinquency

Social Disorganization Versus Social Efficacy

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Some Background

The Eighteenth Century

Napoleon was a pretty big guy, even though vertically challenged. He knew how to get things done. He ran into a few problems outside Moscow and had a really bad day at Waterloo, but when he wasn't busy trying to take places over, he was initiating reforms at home. In France, he centralized local governments; rewrote civil, commercial and criminal law codes; and even balanced the budget, among other things. As a result of his efforts, in the years that followed, local officials and local arms of government agencies started collecting data about how the country was running.¹ And, as often happens with data, when researchers are hanging around, someone starts looking at them. Even back then, some people didn't get out enough.

Officials were particularly interested in seeing the effects of their new criminal laws. How many people were being arrested, imprisoned, flogged, or hung in different parts of the country? (Radzinowicz 1966). Using a lot of ink and addition, researchers like Guerry and Quetelet in France found *spatial variation* in the rate at which people were being arrested for crime in different parts of the country (Brantingham and Brantingham 1991).

The specifics of the patterns they observed still hold true for researchers looking at spatial differences in crime rates today:

(1) There were 86 "departments" in France; a few had very high rates, a few had very low rates, and many places were in between. (2) These differences between regions appeared relatively stable over time. (3) The rates varied widely; for example, the rate of people accused of crimes against persons for the period 1826–1830 ranged from 1/2,199 in Corse to 1/37,014 in Creuse.² (4) Patterns for violent and property crimes differed. Violent crimes were highest in southern rural areas; property rates were highest in industrialized, northern, urbanized departments. Each of these features of local crime rates has proven true in most subsequent research over the past 150 years.

Researchers in Britain around the same time found comparable patterns when they examined data at the county level and below: marked spatial variation in the crime rates (e.g., Glyde 1856). But the differences were not always what they expected. In the mid-1850s in Suffolk County, England, the highest crime rates were in the rural part of the county.

Complementing these statistical efforts were investigations by nineteenth-century British social workers going into some of these "bad" areas (Morris 1957). They saw deplorable conditions right out of a Charles Dickens novel. Their reports led to some widespread slum-clearing efforts. Nonetheless, some of these same locations, populated largely by "thieves and pickpockets and prostitutes," remained high-crime areas in the late 1880s, at the turn of the century, and through to the 1960s (Brantingham and Brantingham 1991, 11).

By the end of the nineteenth century, environmental criminologists had discovered the following fundamental features about spatial and temporal distributions of crime:

- There is spatial variation in rates of reported crime. This variation shows up no matter the level of resolution. It is higher in some places than in others, regardless of whether one is looking at large-scale units, such as counties, or areas within counties, like different towns or different cities or different sections of a city.

- The spatial variation in crime rates is higher in some places than in others, regardless of the scale of the area made in the local area.
- Sometimes the spatial variation in crime rates is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In 1980, 71% of the homicide-rate counties in the United States were rural. Breault, and Ham

The challenge for criminologists is to explain why crime rates are higher in some places than in others, and what causes them to stay higher, and what causes them to change. In the field called *environmental criminology*, researchers seek to understand these patterns fundamentally distinct from traditional criminology:

- Why are crime rates higher in some places than in others?
- Why are the rates of violent crimes, or property crimes, higher in some places than in others?
- How do offenders get from work, home, or school, where they are at the time they commit their crimes?

The Twentieth Century

The Pattern

In the twentieth century, criminologists continued to examine crime rates (e.g., Cohen and Felson 1979). But they also turned their attention to understanding the spatial variation in crime rates—how did it vary across a city, for example? Much of the discussion was domestic. Before we get to the United States, let's hear about one of the first, Cyril Burt, an influential criminologist (1883–1971), who was never to be knighted; he was a fictitious female coat of arms that have demolished any claim to his name, may have falsified

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nineteenth century, environmental features about distributions of crime:

variation in rates of crime shows up at a level of resolution. It is different in others, whether one is looking at such as counties, or counties, like different cities or different

- The spatial variation is persistent. Areas that are high on offense or offender or delinquency rates might stay high for a decade, or even generations, regardless of the physical changes made in the locale.
- Sometimes the spatial patterns are not what you would expect. High violence in rural areas represents one case in point. In 1980, 71 out of the 100 highest homicide-rate counties in the United States were rural counties (Kposowa, Breault, and Harrison 1995).

The challenge for environmental criminologists is to explain why the rates are higher in some places than others, why they stay higher, and what can be done about this. In the field called *environmental criminology*, researchers seek to understand three fundamentally distinct yet interrelated questions:

- Why are crime or victimization rates higher in some places than others?
- Why are the rates at which people commit crimes, or become delinquent, higher in some places than others?
- How do offenders "travel to work"—going from work, or home, or a place where they are at leisure to a site where they commit their offense?

The Twentieth Century

The Pattern

In the twentieth century, researchers continued to examine regional variation in crime rates (e.g., Cohen and Nisbett 1994). But they also turned their attention to understanding the spatial variation at a lower level—how did it vary across communities in a city, for example? Most of the work we will discuss was domestically produced. But before we get to the United States, you might want to hear about one more European. Sir Cyril Burt, an influential British psychologist (1883–1971), was the only psychologist ever to be knighted; he also published with a fictitious female coauthor, was reputed to have demolished any colleagues opposing him, may have falsified some of his data later

in his career and, most importantly for you, is one of the godfathers of the SATs and the GREs (Dorfman 1978).

But when Sir Burt was not making up standardized tests, he was researching topics like genetics and IQ, or, of more interest here, delinquency and class. In 1925 he published *The Young Delinquent* (Burt 1925).³ He looked up the addresses of boys and girls reported as "industrial school cases" in London. Then he looked up where they lived and made up a *delinquency rate*.⁴ For every 1,000 people living in the district between ages 9 and 15, how many had become industrial school cases?

A pattern emerged that is now quite familiar to ecological crime researchers in this country. In London, in the early part of this century, delinquency rates were highest in the areas right near the central business district (CBD), and they declined as you moved toward the edge of the city. In addition, the areas of highest delinquency were also the areas of highest poverty. Burt concluded that a relationship existed between social class and delinquency. Furthermore, even though his data were cross-sectional, he concluded that the relationship was causal.⁵

Even though later research of individuals continued to find connections between delinquency and social class (e.g., Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981), Burt made two mistakes in interpreting his data. First, he committed or at least came very close to committing the *ecological fallacy*. He presumed that the relationships he described connecting features of areas also described connections between attributes of individuals. In 1939, E. L. Thorndike, another psychologist, in a two-page journal article showed why this is not necessarily true computationally (Thorndike 1939). It also does not have to hold logically. If poorer areas have higher delinquency rates, this does not mean that because I am poor, or that because I live in a low-income neighborhood, I am necessarily more likely to become delinquent. In short, the connections we find between characteristics of areas do not necessarily tell us about connections between the characteristics of individuals.

In addition, Burt presumed that correlations implied causality. If I find that low-income areas have higher delinquency rates, this does not mean that their low-income status caused them to have higher delinquency rates. The higher delinquency rates could have caused the lower income level over time, as households with the means to move left the neighborhood to provide a better setting for their children or left so that they would have a safer, victimization-free setting for their golden years. Alternatively, each could have been caused by some third factor, making their relationship spurious. For example, the racial composition of the neighborhood may have led to a withdrawal of city services over time, such as policing and quality education, or declining commercial interest in the locale, resulting over time in both a lower-income neighborhood and a higher delinquency-rate neighborhood (see Figure 1).

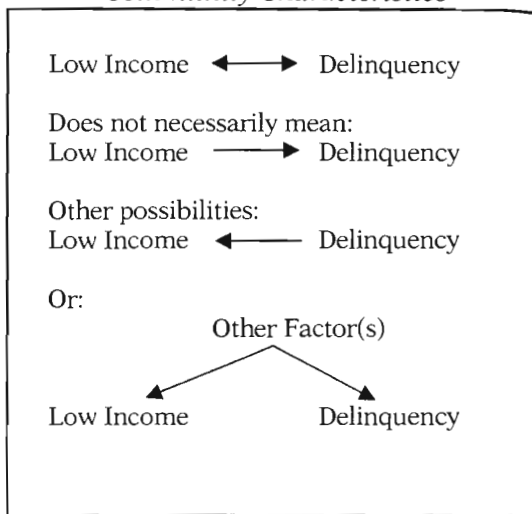
Let us cross the pond and talk about U.S. cities. Sociologists at the University of Chicago in the first half of the twentieth century investigated a wide array of urban social problems: delinquency, petty theft, dance halls, gambling, and immigrants' "culture shock," to name a few. These researchers in the Chicago School of Human Ecology not only carried out research, but also tried to get programs going, based on their work, to solve some of the city's problems.

Two of these sociologists, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, investigated delinquency (Shaw and McKay [1942] 1969). They collected data not only from Chicago, but from other cities as well: Philadelphia, Richmond, Cleveland, Birmingham, Denver, and Seattle.

Shaw and McKay went to juvenile courts and collected data about the number of juveniles who had been adjudicated delinquent.⁶ They collected a lot of data about delinquents over a number of decades.⁷

Shaw and McKay's underpaid graduate students at the University of Chicago then used the addresses of these juveniles found delinquent to plot their location on a map of Chicago.⁸ Some of these maps can be found today on display at the University.

Figure 1
Interpreting Relationships Between Community Characteristics



Other researchers at the University of Chicago had used information about natural physical boundaries in the city (rivers, railroad tracks, large blocks of nonresidential land use, dramatic shifts in housing quality, main thoroughfares) and current ethnic, racial, and class variations in settlement patterns, to carve up the entire city into 75 *natural areas* (Hunter 1974).⁹ Because they knew from U.S. Census data how many people lived in each natural area at the end of each decade, and how many of those were of the same age as those youth whose records they had unearthed in family court, they were able to construct *delinquency rates*: for every 1,000 youth living in the community between the ages of 9 and 15, how many had officially been adjudicated delinquent by the court? They also constructed rates using other spatial units, such as one-square-mile areas.

Shaw and McKay collected these delinquency data for many years in Chicago. In addition, they collected delinquency data for the other cities mentioned above and likewise plotted those data on maps, constructing rates for various areas within each city. Not only that, they also spatially plotted other features of the communities in which they were interested, such as the number of housing structures demolished.

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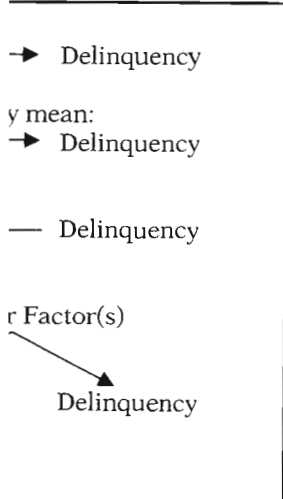
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The Context Pre-W

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Figure 1
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With these data in hand, Shaw and McKay, like Burt had earlier, linked delinquency with community characteristics. In contrast to Burt, however, they clearly stated that their interest was in *communities*, not individual delinquents. They hoped to identify the community characteristics linked to high juvenile delinquency rates.

The Theory

“Classic” Social Disorganization Theory

The Context Pre-World War II. As had Burt, Shaw and McKay (1942, 18) found higher delinquency rates closer to the center of the city, the *central business district* (CBD), than they did farther away from the city center. Indeed, they observed that the further away a community was from the city center, the lower its delinquency rate. This pattern appeared not just in Chicago, but in each of the other cities they examined as well, such as Philadelphia.

As is often true in cities, spatial differences link to social and economic differences. At the time Shaw and McKay were writing, populations were increasing in older cities. This “engine” of city growth led to economic differences across communities at varying distances from the city center. More specifically, because of city growth, the CBD was expanding to keep up and “serve” the growth in the broader city. This, of course, had happened in the past as well. Given this historical and ongoing pattern, more desirable locations were always at the outer edge of the expanding city. Land use closer to the city center was often converted to nonresidential land uses, such as large industries, stockyards (in the case of both Chicago and Baltimore), and large commercial concerns. The dominant modes of transport from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century for heavy goods were railways and shipping. Those two modes often converged near a city center. So the easiest way to get the hogs (Baltimore) or the cattle (Chicago) off the railroads, slaughtered, and shipped out by rail or water or both was to locate all of this near the city center. Not surprisingly, not too many people wanted to live near slaughtering houses or heavy manufac-

turing or the congestion, soot, and noise that generally surrounded the activities found in central-city locations.

Not only were more central locations less desirable per se, they also were the sites of older housing. For the most part, older housing is also more worn-out housing. Given these less desirable locations and more dilapidated housing stock, housing in these areas tended to be less expensive. The further you got from the city center, the more likely you were to encounter newer housing and more desirable neighborhoods. So house prices and apartment rents increased as you progressed away from downtown.

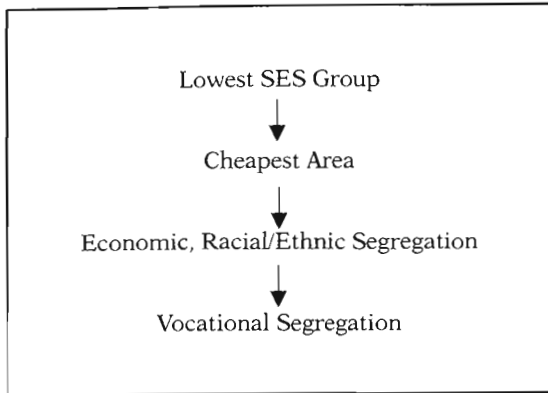
As you might expect, as prices shifted, so too did the types of households living there. Poorer households were more likely to locate close to the city center, where housing was least expensive. Farther away, you would find housing occupied by low-wage or blue-collar workers. More distant, you would find middle-income households. And finally, even farther away, in an outer city or perhaps in a more distant suburban location, you would find the highest-income households.

These economic differences in house values and rents were exacerbated by the threat of invasion from the expanding CBD. People were constantly trying to “trade up” in their housing and move to a slightly better location. But, because the CBD was growing at the time, residents from each inner zone would be “invading” the zones just beyond.¹⁰ In the innermost zone, the residential areas were in transition, converting from residential to commercial or industrial. This zone was thus labeled the *transition zone*. These impending changes led those residents who could get out to do so, and led those who owned properties there to stop maintaining them and to maximize their return by converting these units to apartments. Left living in these sites were low-income individuals and households who could not afford housing anywhere else. The residential environment here was rather chaotic.

Linked to the economic differences were ethnic ones. It is generally true, with some exceptions (Massey and Denton 1993) that the newest immigrants to a city are predomi-

nantly lower-income households. This is still true today in large U.S. cities even though the immigrant groups in question are different now than they were then.¹¹ Consequently, many members of these immigrant groups, when they first arrived in U.S. cities, were limited to central-city, low-income neighborhoods where housing was cheap.

Figure 2
Spatially-Linked Socioeconomic Dynamics Underlying Shaw and McKay's Model Explaining Delinquency Differences



In short, Shaw and McKay's basic model was an *economic* one; location-based dynamics were set in motion based on the socioeconomic status of the group in question. The physical dilapidation of an area matched the segregation of the population on an economic basis (see Figure 2).

The Post-World War II Context. Of course, the spatial pattern described above has shifted markedly in large cities in the post-World War II era. Consider the following (Bursik, 1986; 1989): (1) Centralized city planning increased in the years following World War II. Urban renewal initiatives destroyed vast tracts of older, worn-out housing in older cities and replaced them with large numbers of public-housing communities, built in only small numbers before the war. Many of those displaced from older "slum" locations lost many friends in the process (Frey 1984; Gans 1962). The siting of these communities influenced the surrounding locations, sometimes destabilizing them (Bursik 1989). (2) Suburbanization in-

creased as federal highway initiatives, especially under Eisenhower, provided drastically improved road access to cities. (3) But, for a number of reasons, the suburbanization of African-American households proceeded more slowly than the suburbanization of white households. Consequently, the larger, older cities themselves became increasingly African-American in composition. (4) Passage of various fair housing laws, and related court cases in the 1950s and 1960s, increased African-Americans' access to housing. In cities where African-Americans had historically been limited to specific sections of the city, pent-up demand resulted in rapid racial turnover in large numbers of neighborhoods.

Since about 1970, additional changes in cities have further modified the spatial pattern described above (Gottdiener 1994). Most importantly, large numbers of manufacturing jobs have left, migrating from central-city locations first to southern locations, then abroad, making it increasingly difficult for those with relatively low education levels to secure employment. Receiving more media attention than has perhaps been warranted given the relatively small number of locations where it has occurred, central-city neighborhoods in many urban locations have become partially gentrified. Lower-income households were partially replaced by middle- or upper-income households that moved in and improved the housing stock.

Given these shifts seen in the last fifty years in cities, we would not necessarily expect to see the same spatial pattern for delinquency rates, or crime rates, as were reported for the years prior to World War II. Nonetheless, we still might expect community characteristics to link to these outcomes in a similar way.

The Central Process

At the heart of the human ecological model of offense and delinquency rates is a constellation of processes: *social disorganization*. Its opposite is *collective efficacy*. A locale is socially disorganized if several things are true: residents do not get along with one another; residents do not belong to local organizations geared to bettering the commu-

nity and thus cannot effectively to address problems hold different values what is not acceptable street; and residents are when they see other gaged in wrongdoing Maccoby, Johnson, and you can see, the social contains several themes

By contrast, if collect a locale, residents will get along somewhat v will take steps to super or teens taking place cale. *Collective efficacy* tures of community so ganizational participa the local improve your neighbor?) (Lo 1990; Portney and B Wandersman 1983 Rappaport 1988); info your neighbor saw a y ing the side of a buil would he do somethi Ho, and Urquhart-Ro cial ties based on phy many of the people li you know by name? H ognize when you see t borrow a tool, could y neighbor?) (Fischer 1

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nity and thus cannot work together effectively to address common problems; residents hold different values about what is and what is not acceptable behavior on the street; and residents are unlikely to interfere when they see other youths or adults engaged in wrongdoing (Bursik 1988; Maccoby, Johnson, and Church 1958). As you can see, the social disorganization idea contains several themes.

By contrast, if collective efficacy is high in a locale, residents will work together on common, neighborhood-wide issues, will get along somewhat with one another, and will take steps to supervise activities of youth or teens taking place in the immediate locale. *Collective efficacy* refers to several features of community social life including organizational participation (Do you belong to the local improvement association? Does your neighbor?) (Logan and Rabrenovic 1990; Portney and Berry 1997; Unger and Wandersman 1983; Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988); informal social control (If your neighbor saw a young teen spray painting the side of a building about midnight, would he do something about it?) (Hackler, Ho, and Urquhart-Ross 1974); and local social ties based on physical proximity (How many of the people living on your block do you know by name? How many can you recognize when you see them? If you needed to borrow a tool, could you do so from a close neighbor?) (Fischer 1982; Hummon 1990).

Researchers have suggested that three levels of resident-based control shape the level of social disorganization versus collective efficacy in a locale (Bursik and Grasmick 1992; Hunter 1985). *Private control* refers to dynamics within families and between close friends. If junioretta extorts school lunch money from two other neighbors while walking to school and her parents find out about it, will they punish her appropriately? *Parochial control* refers to supervisory efforts made by neighbors and acquaintances. If a neighbor while gardening out back sees junioretta walking down the alley threatening two other children and demanding their lunch funds, will she grab junioretta by the ear and walk her home to her dad, or will she, the neighbor, just shrug her shoulders

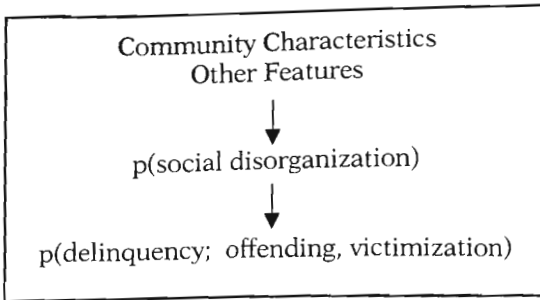
and go about planting her tomatoes? How much parochial control is exercised varies from block to block in a neighborhood (Taylor 1997b). *Public control* refers to the neighborhood leadership's ability to garner resources from public and private agencies outside the neighborhood. Can the community association's leaders effectively lobby "City Hall" for resources for neighborhood improvements and programs? For example, can they obtain funding for more school crossing guards on well-traveled routes leading to and from the local school? Can they work collaboratively with other neighborhood organizations on issues affecting their part of town?

High delinquency rates occurred in low-income, ethnically heterogeneous, unstable locations because those ecological characteristics made social disorganization more likely. In lower-income locales residents' concerns are more spatially circumscribed than in higher-income locales (Suttles 1972; Taylor 1988). In some low-income neighborhoods, residents feel safe only within their own dwelling (Rainwater 1966). As ethnic heterogeneity increases, it becomes increasingly difficult for residents to "decode" what other residents are doing. There are language barriers, and increasing intercultural distance just makes it harder to figure out what is going on (Merry 1981). A Cambodian woman looking out her window at a group of ten teen African-Americans on the corner standing around, shouting, and punching one another may not be sure if a fight is starting or if they are just celebrating Sammy Sosa's setting a new all-time home run record. As instability increases, residents have less time to get to know their neighbors; it is harder to figure out who belongs on the block and who does not.

In other words, these structural attributes of the community either increased or decreased the chances that residents would exert some control over what took place in their community; these dynamics in turn would influence outcomes like delinquency, the local offending rate, and local victimization rates.

Note that social disorganization *mediates* the impacts of community structure on the

Figure 3



outcomes. It represents a crucial link connecting community fabric with the outcomes (see Figure 3).

Social disorganization was likely to be strongest, and collective efficacy weakest, when a community was in the midst of an *invasion-succession* cycle. In such a cycle, a neighborhood “turns over,” with one type of resident replacing another. In the midst of such a cycle, residents are unlikely to know their neighbors, and the local population will be quite heterogeneous in makeup.

Neighborhood residents are always changing: people move in and people move out. But if the two rates are roughly matched, and if the volume is relatively modest, and if those moving in are sociodemographically similar to those moving out, then the neighborhood is stable (Ahlbrandt and Cunningham 1979). But if the volume of in-movers increases beyond a relatively low rate, and if the in-movers are sociodemographically dissimilar from the current residents, then over time the population in the locale would change. There would be an “invasion” of a new type of resident, and eventually that new type of resident would “succeed” the older type of resident.

Such cycles could be seen most clearly in the 1960s and 1970s in urban neighborhoods where racial succession took place, and white populations were replaced in relatively short order by African-American households. Many expected that gentrified neighborhoods would follow the same cycle, but they have not. Even in some of the most reclaimed neighborhoods, higher-income, recent in-migrant owners mingle on the street with lower-income, longer-term rent-

ers (Lee and Mergenhausen 1984; Levy and Cybriwsky 1980). The invasion-succession cycle can “stall” before completion.

What the Research Shows

Shaw and McKay’s initial research was followed by a wide array of subsequent studies, usually in urban settings. Rather than attempt an exhaustive review of studies, I focus on a few. Each one described supports or develops the theory in question in a particular way.

Shaw and McKay’s initial cross-sectional findings have been supported again and again (Baldwin 1975, 1979). Studies routinely find the following:

- Delinquency and offense and offender rates are higher closer to the city center than farther away, although there are exceptions, and although each of these outcomes maps differently onto spatial structure (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976).
- Delinquency and offense and offender rates are higher in lower-income, and/or less stable, and/or more predominantly African-American communities (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Harries 1980), although differences have arisen regarding the relative contribution of each attribute and the appropriate labels to apply to some of the dimensions of urban community structure examined (Gordon 1967, 1968; Sampson and Lauritsen 1994). For example, some have argued that relative socioeconomic status in a locale—how poor the residents are, or how poor they are relative to those residents in adjoining neighborhoods—is the most important community correlate of high violent-crime rates (Land, McCall, and Cohen 1990). Others argue that family disruption, and/or family structures that are less stable or provide less supervision of the locale are the most important (Sampson and Lauritsen 1994). This debate is not about to end anytime soon.

Another ecological feature leading away from delinquency and investigated repeat-

edly is religious collective relationships and delinquency of the country where somewhat prevalent Kent, and Doyle 1991 home from Sunday your hubcaps as boys the pool hall? On the they are, but not so country. Religious changed through families in extremely tagged contexts, and collective efficacy is and avoid be (Furstenberg 1999).

Changes

In essence, the book focuses on a complex larger urban fabric *changes over time*. It ability, and racial changes in those frequencies rates. Here help you think about change.

In 1990, you might neighborhood in Ajax house value in your \$56,000. At that time, living in Ajax neighborhoods where the average at that value or low neighborhoods where price was higher. \$ house value percent percentile.¹²

In the year 2000, the average house value neighborhood might still be correspond now to What has happened the city population with an average house or lower.

Even though, after tion, house values held steady in the 19

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Research Shows

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edly is religious context. Work shows negative relationships between religious attendance and delinquency, but only in regions of the country where churchgoing is at least somewhat prevalent (Stark 1996; Stark, Kent, and Doyle 1982). Are boys on the way home from Sunday school as likely to swipe your hubcaps as boys on the way home from the pool hall? On the West Coast it appears they are, but not so in other areas of the country. Religious context may be strengthened through family context, allowing children in extremely economically disadvantaged contexts, and perhaps contexts where collective efficacy is low, to "beat the odds" and avoid becoming delinquent (Furstenberg 1999).

Changes Over Time

In essence, the human ecological theory focuses on a community's position in the larger urban fabric *and how that position changes over time*. It is its relative status, stability, and racial composition, and the changes in those features that determine changes in offense, offender, and delinquency rates. Here are some examples to help you think about the idea of relative change.

In 1990, you might have been living in a neighborhood in Ajax City where the average house value in your neighborhood was \$56,000. At that time, 50 percent of the population living in Ajax City lived in neighborhoods where the average housing price was at that value or lower; 50 percent lived in neighborhoods where the average house price was higher. So your neighborhood's house value percentile score was the 50th percentile.¹²

In the year 2000, controlling for inflation, the average house value in your neighborhood might still be \$56,000, but that might correspond now to a percentile score of 15. What has happened? Now only 15 percent of the city population live in neighborhoods with an average house value of that amount or lower.

Even though, after controlling for inflation, house values in your neighborhood held steady in the 1990s, they failed to keep

pace with house value increases taking place elsewhere in your city. The other neighborhoods have "moved ahead" faster than your neighborhood did in the intervening decade. Maybe some new businesses moving in created strong demand for housing in several other parts of town. Your neighborhood's position has "slipped" relative to theirs, at least on this feature of community fabric.

Human ecology theory suggests that relative changes in dimensions like this will affect informal social control processes and outcomes like victimization, delinquency, and offending. So over the decade, the increases in delinquency, offending, and victimization in your neighborhood—relative to those rates in other neighborhoods in the city—might increase. Here are some ideas about how these processes might work.

If house values in the neighborhood in question were slipping during the decade, relative to other city neighborhoods, homeowners there may have tried to sell their houses, to get out "while the getting was good." Alternatively, the area may have become less attractive for in-migrating, middle-income residents looking for a place where their housing investment would appreciate over time. If house values were slipping relative to the rest of the city, the area became less attractive for house investment. Consequently, a shift may have taken place in the type of resident looking to move into the locale.

This shift in the type of in-migrating household may have widened background differences, and discrepancies in values as well, between long-term households and those moving in. Longer-term residents may frown on those who leave their children "on the street" during a summer day, locking them out of the house. Single-parent, working moms recently moved into the neighborhood may not think they have any choice other than to lock their kids out, and may reason that someone will look out for their children.

In a series of studies using Shaw and McKay's data on delinquency and census characteristics in Chicago, Bob Bursik examined these connections between community shifts and delinquency shifts from the

1930s through the 1960s (Bursik 1984, 1986; Bursik and Webb 1982; Heitgard and Bursik 1987). He observed, as expected, that more rapid community shifts were connected with more rapid changes in the delinquency rate. The ways in which neighborhoods changed varied across each decade, as did the relative contribution of different types of neighborhood changes to changes in delinquency. What was happening in each decade was conditioned by the historical context. But despite these variations in each decade, community changes were linked to delinquency changes in the expected ways. For example, increasing unemployment and increasing nonwhite racial composition were both tied to increasing delinquency rates in the 1960s.¹³

A Los Angeles study looked at community changes and delinquency changes during some of the same decades (Schuerman and Kobrin 1986). These researchers observed connections in the predicted directions, focusing on “lagged” relationships. For example, they found that neighborhood features in 1960 helped explain the changes in delinquency observed by 1970.

Changes in neighborhood fabric link not only to changes in delinquency but also to changes in violence as well. A Baltimore study of changes in the 1970s found that neighborhoods shifting more dramatically in stability or status experienced more sizable shifts in violence as well (Taylor and Covington 1988). Which particular feature of neighborhood fabric proved important depended on the type of violent crime examined.

Briefly put, one of the major extensions of social disorganization theory in the last two decades has been the application of the model to ecological changes over time. As the theory predicts, neighborhoods whose composition is changing more rapidly, relative to the other neighborhoods in the city, are more likely to experience increasing delinquency or crime problems. Even if the rapid change is in a “positive” direction, such as gentrification, increasing crime may accompany the shift (Covington and Taylor 1989).

Centrality of Social Disorganization Versus Collective Efficacy

The studies mentioned immediately above are limited in an important way. They include the “front end” of the human ecology model—attributes of community and how they shift over time—and the “back end”—the actual crime or delinquency outcomes. However, they leave out the crucial middle—the indicators reporting how much social disorganization or collective efficacy is actually taking place in a neighborhood. Recall that the features of neighborhood structure only predispose, not predict, a neighborhood to have more or less social disorganization (Kornhauser 1978).

Two key studies highlight the central importance of social disorganization versus collective efficacy processes. The first used a national victimization survey conducted every now and then in the United Kingdom, called the British Crime Survey. Sampson and Groves aggregated the survey data to the neighborhood level and then threw away the individual data.¹⁴ Thus, they could concentrate just on community-level dynamics (Sampson and Grove 1989).

Sampson and Groves’ analysis confirmed two key parts of the social disorganization model. First, for the most part, elements of community fabric linked in the expected ways to indicators of collective efficacy versus social disorganization. Indicators included local friendship networks, perception of troublesome teen groups, and participation in local organizations. For example, as ethnic heterogeneity of the locale increased, so too did residents’ reports about bothersome teen groups.

Second, these indicators of social efficacy versus social disorganization influenced outcomes like offending rates based on self-reports. For example, in neighborhoods where residents reported more problems with unsupervised teen groups, they also reported higher rates of offending. Also, as expected by the model, the impact of community structure on the outcomes was mediated by the indicators of social efficacy versus social disorganization.¹⁵

A more recent study by Sampson, Raudenbush, and Wooldredge not only reexamined social efficacy versus social disorganization but also investigated how neighborhood structure at both the community level and the neighborhood level influenced the 8,000 residents in 10 neighborhood clusters who were interviewed. Researchers joined the two levels of analysis to expect informal social ties, and organizational resources to mediate a more general

Attention focused on related outcomes: (1) how often various crimes occurred in the neighborhood over 12 months; (2) violent crime in the neighborhood—a measure of neighborhood safety—either by the respondent or by other household members; and (3) reports with addresses of those murders that were solved. Those murders that were not solved were a by-product of the field effort within the neighborhood cluster level. The model could be constructed to test the

Collective efficacy from neighborhood level also varied between neighborhoods. For the human ecology model, researchers controlled for living in each neighborhood collective efficacy and the features of neighborhood

Original Formulation

Community Change
Other Features

Suggested Revision

Community Change
Other Features

Disorganization and Collective Efficacy

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A more recent study, done in Chicago by Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) not only reexamined the importance of social efficacy versus social disorganization, it also investigated how these dynamics are structured at both the individual as well as the community level. In this project, over 8,000 residents in 343 Chicago neighborhood clusters were interviewed.¹⁶ Researchers joined together indicators of expected informal social control, local social ties, and organizational participation to create a more general measure of social capital.

Attention focused on three violence-related outcomes: (1) respondent estimates of how often various violent events had occurred in the neighborhood in the last six months; (2) violent victimization in the neighborhood—at any time—experienced either by the respondent or by other household members; and (3) police homicide reports with address level information for those murders taking place during the survey field effort were aggregated to the neighborhood cluster level so that homicide rates could be constructed.

Collective efficacy varied significantly from neighborhood to neighborhood, but it also varied between neighbors in the same neighborhood. Perhaps most importantly for the human ecology model, even after researchers controlled for the type of people living in each neighborhood, average neighborhood collective efficacy was linked to features of neighborhood fabric. For example,

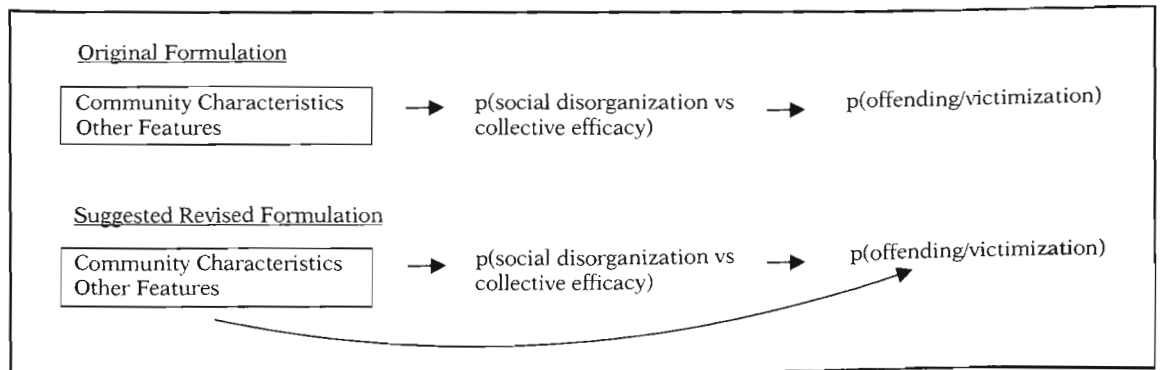
it was weaker in poorer, less stable, and more immigrant-dominated neighborhoods.

Collective efficacy in turn, even after controlling for survey respondent characteristics, linked to outcomes like neighborhood-to-neighborhood differences in perceived violence, violent victimization experiences, and recent homicides. Collective efficacy, however, did not completely mediate impacts on neighborhood fabric. Structural features of the neighborhood continued to exert independent impacts on the outcomes even after controlling for collective efficacy. Extreme disadvantage—neighborhoods with lots of poverty, unemployment, African-American households, and female-headed households—continued to strongly influence the outcomes. The authors concluded “that concentrated disadvantage more than race per se is the driving structural force at play” (923). In short, these results suggest a slight modification to the process described by the human ecology model (see Figure 4).

Extending the Model to Fear and Other Reactions to Crime

So far, the human ecology model has expanded from a focus just on delinquency as an outcome to reported violent crime rates, adult offending rates, and victimization rates. Bursik (1988) also has suggested that it might apply to reactions to crime, such as fear of crime, avoiding dangerous places, and staying in more at night.

Figure 4
Initial and Revised Human Ecology Process Models



I used data from 66 Baltimore neighborhoods gathered in the early 1980s to test the applicability of the social disorganization model to responses to crime (Taylor 1996). Instead of looking at collective efficacy versus social disorganization, however, I looked at a closely related set of dynamics tapping local social involvement and attachment. I found that the impacts of neighborhood structure on reactions to crime were, as predicted, mediated by the “attached and involved” index. Neighborhoods where residents relied on neighbors more, and felt a stronger connection with their community, were neighborhoods where residents were less fearful and more responsive to potential problems.¹⁷ As predicted by the human ecology model in its initial formulation (Figure 3, top panel), neighborhood makeup affected responses to crime only by way of the effects of neighborhood makeup on the “attached and involved” index.

Other studies have likewise applied a social disorganization perspective to fear of crime or other responses to disorder (e.g., Covington and Taylor 1991; Perkins, Meeks, and Taylor 1992; Perkins and Taylor 1996; Rountree and Land 1996a, b). Although there are some differences from study to study, it does appear that neighborhood structure—especially status and stability—affects these outcomes in ways anticipated by the model, and that indicators of social disorganization versus social efficacy at least partially mediate the relationship.

Extensions to Signs of Disorder

In the last few years, one group of researchers has put the human ecology model through the following changes: they have “psychologized” the basic social disorganization model, added a physical component, and then “re-ecologized” it while adding additional outcomes linked to neighborhood change. Within this family of models are several different variations; they are generally referred to as *broken windows*, *crime and grime*, *decline and disorder*, or the *incivilities thesis* (Taylor 1997a).

The kernel of the idea was that some residents are more surrounded by, and more

bothered by, disorderly social and physical conditions. The social conditions include the unruly teens we have been talking about, “hey honey” hassles, public drug sales or drug usage, public drinking or drunkenness, and so on. Linked physical conditions include more extensive litter, graffiti, abandoned houses, abandoned cars, weedy vacant lots, and houses in disrepair.

The first theorists paying attention to these conditions suggested that those viewing them would feel vulnerable and at risk of being victimized (Garofalo and Laub 1978). Others suggested it was the lack of repair made to deteriorated physical conditions that sparked residents’ concerns—the broken window that wasn’t fixed (Perkins, Meeks, and Taylor 1992; Wilson and Kelling 1982).

The theory further evolved to encompass how these dynamics would unfold over time. The window isn’t fixed, or the graffiti isn’t erased, and residents become more fearful, local rowdies act bolder and vandalize further, and the process spirals onward.

Further, as noted above, the model got “re-ecologized.” Researchers began suggesting that the outcomes applied to neighborhoods, not just individuals. So outcomes like neighborhood fear, neighborhood economic decline, increasing neighborhood instability, and neighborhood outmigration became of interest. Some suggested that these disorderly social and physical conditions could independently cause neighborhoods to go down the tubes (Skogan 1990).

The only part of this theory that has received strong, consistent support is the psychological version. Those who, at one point in time, perceive more problems than their neighbors, are indeed more concerned about their personal safety and more desirous of leaving their neighborhood (Perkins, Meeks, and Taylor 1992; Perkins and Taylor 1996; Taylor 1997a). At the neighborhood level, disorderly social behavior and physical deterioration might mediate or carry the impacts of neighborhood structure or changes in structure on fear of crime (Covington and Taylor 1991; Skogan 1990; Taylor and Covington 1993). But deterioration does not make its own independent contribution

(Kurtz, Koons, and 1998). In part, this is so strongly driven by the nature of the neighborhood (1988; Taylor, Shum 1985).

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(Kurtz, Koons, and Taylor 1998; Taylor 1998). In part, this is because deterioration is so strongly driven itself by the basic structure of the neighborhood (Hope and Hough 1988; Taylor, Shumaker, and Gottfredson 1985).

Implications

Implications for delinquency prevention emerging from the human ecology model prove straightforward. This theoretical approach has been the touchstone for prevention programs for well over fifty years, most notably in the original Chicago Area Projects launched in the 1930s, with assistance from Shaw himself (Lab 1992, 140). Community development programs were launched to increase organizational effectiveness of local groups, strengthen informal supervision of youth, teach youth skills, and provide viable alternatives to troublesome behavior. Numerous programs along these lines continue today (Podolefsky 1983).

Space limitations preclude a full discussion of whether or not community redevelopment programs like these achieve their objectives. But the most important point here is that according to this theoretical perspective, if you want to reduce delinquency in a locale you need to change the locale, to shift it from being socially disorganized to being socially effective, on different levels. This is not a small challenge. But this perspective suggests no point in trying to change the potential delinquent unless you also can shape his or her surround.

A second, perhaps less obvious, policy implication emerging from the perspective is the importance of residential stability. Repeatedly, analyses demonstrate the powerful independent impacts of residential stability on local social efficacy (McKenzie 1921) and, in turn, on crime and delinquency outcomes. Neighborhood redevelopment projects often disrupt local social ties and informal supervision of youth if they displace large numbers of long-term residents. Such projects increase the risk of local youth becoming delinquent. Redevelopment planners would do well to think how their efforts might be accomplished without damaging

the neighborhood social fabric dependent upon and emerging from lengthy tenure.

Notes

1. For a pretty humorous perspective on this era, see Danny Kaye in *The Inspector General*.
2. Creuse is an agricultural section in central France. Corse is an island in the Mediterranean 105 miles south of France.
3. The anticipated follow-up volume, *The Old Delinquent*, did not appear.
4. Actually, we're pretty sure it was his coworkers and students who did the actual work.
5. A relationship is cross-sectional if the correlation is between two variables measured at roughly the same point in time. But correlation does not prove causation. Just because beaches near the shore that have higher volumes of ice cream sales have more drownings per month than beaches with low ice cream sales, that does not mean the ice cream sales cause the drownings. Nor does it mean the reverse. A relationship is longitudinal if one variable, the predictor, is measured before the other variable, the outcome. Then, depending on a range of factors, the researcher may be able to make the case that one variable causes the other.
6. If you have not yet had a course in juvenile justice, except for offenses where a juvenile is tried as an adult, juvenile crimes and acts of delinquency are handled through a separate court system, usually called *family court*. A juvenile brought before the court can be "found delinquent" by a master or judge, which means that he or she agrees the juvenile did commit a delinquent act or a crime. Delinquent acts include many activities that are permissible for adults, such as drinking, but also include a special class of actions that make sense only for juveniles, such as defying authority figures. In the Shaw and McKay data, we do not have a breakdown on the specific type of offense for which the juvenile was found delinquent.
7. See Bursik and Grasmick (1993), pp. 30–31, for details.
8. I have never known any graduate student who protested that he or she was paid fairly or was overpaid.
9. These 75 natural areas are larger in size than the neighborhoods typically found in many cities, either at that time or now. For example, Roderick McKenzie, another Chicago sociologist who went on to Ohio State, researched

neighborhood associations in Columbus (OH). He found that four out of the five community groups that he studied comprised just a few blocks along a major street that had a trolley car running on it. Al Hunter and others have suggested that in defining the natural areas in Chicago the researchers tried to impose some uniformity on the variations in community size.

10. Growing CBDs were a feature of large cities in the first half of the twentieth century. This was less true in older cities after World War II as they stopped growing and began losing population, and as automobile and truck transport superseded rail.
11. The important exception here is for African-Americans, who, despite relatively long tenure in many large U.S. cities, remain a highly segregated population, with substantial numbers limited to extremely low-income locations. Some, such as William Julius Wilson, have suggested that their concentration in poor, urban locations has increased since 1970.
12. These percentile scores are just like SAT scores. If your SAT Verbal score put you in the 98th percentile, it means that 98 percent of those taking the test had a score equal to or lower than yours.
13. Bursik (1986), Table 4.
14. For example, suppose I wanted to find out what class in your major was hardest. I could take the grade in each section in each class last semester, save just those class averages, and throw away the individual information around each of those averages. I have aggregated the class grades. I can then use the lowest class average to decide which class was hardest.
15. The researchers know the connection is mediated because they do the following checks. When they put in the community structure indicators by themselves, they have a big impact on the outcome. But when they then add in the mediating variables, like perceptions of annoying teen groups, the influence of the community structure indicators weakens. The Sampson and Grove study did not flawlessly support all the predictions of social disorganization theory (see Bursik and Grasmick 1993, 44-45).
16. Neighborhood clusters were smaller than the 75 Chicago "natural areas" often used by Chicago researchers, but also more homogeneous.

17. Even though this study used data from one point in time only, I used statistical techniques to assure myself, as best I could, that the relationship did *not* go the other way. It wasn't because people were afraid that they were unlikely to get locally involved.

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