Bursik and Grasmick's recently reformulated, ecologically oriented systemic model of neighborhood disorder explicitly recognizes three levels of informal social control: private (family and close friends), parochial (based on nearby acquaintances), and public (between neighborhoods and external agents and agencies). Recent research suggests that the model deserves further articulation at the parochial level. The author proposes developing the parochial level of informal social control in the following three ways: by recognizing within-neighborhood variations in informal social control and responses to disorder; by acknowledging the central importance of street blocks as durable features of the everyday environment connecting residents to broader ecological dynamics in their neighborhood; and by developing microecological principles, analogous to human ecological principles, to help us understand connections between street block and community-level ecological dynamics. The proposed perspective links ecological and community psychological perspectives with social disorganization processes to clarify spatial and temporal variations in the collective psychogeography of resident-based control.

Although there is undoubtedly a high degree of convergence between setting forces and personal forces within behavior settings, there is also a constant tension and fluctuation in the relative degree and loci of the . . . forces. As a result, behavior settings and their human components continually change, and some of the changes become permanent with settings. . . . Persons outside their homes are always inhabitants of behavior settings.


“New” urban sociologists such as Gottdiener and Feagin (1988) and some criminologists such as Baldwin (1979) have criticized the human ecological perspective as politically naive. The updated systemic model of social disor-
ganization offered by Bursik and Grasmick (1993) represents, in part, an attempt to respond to these criticisms. In *Neighborhoods and Crime*, the authors differentiate three levels of resident-based control, borrowing from earlier formulations by Hunter (1985). They separate informal social control into the private level, among family members and extremely close friends; the parochial level, among acquaintances within a neighborhood; and the public level, linking neighborhoods to outside actors.

The control processes operating at each level are qualitatively different. The primary level of control "is grounded in the intimate informal primary groups that exist in the area. . . . Social control is usually achieved through the allocation or threatened withdrawal of sentiment, social support, and mutual esteem" (Bursik and Grasmick 1993:16). At the parochial level, control is achieved through "the effects of the broader local interpersonal networks and the interlocking of local institutions such as stores, schools, churches, and voluntary organizations" (p. 17). Parochial control relies on "weak" ties and secondary groups, both perhaps emerging partly from participation in local institutions. Public control is achieved by local organizations as they "secure public goods and services that are allocated by agencies located outside the neighborhood" (p. 17).

By including the latter, the authors respond directly to critics of human ecological perspectives. The public level of control captures how a neighborhood gets along with key actors beyond the neighborhood such as public agencies, other neighborhood organizations with whom it might hope to build coalitions, and local politicians.

Further, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) argue that the updated ecological model is relevant to a wide range of outcomes. Not only does it apply to juvenile delinquency rates, they suggest it also helps explain offender rates, crime location, and responses to disorder such as fear of crime and avoidance. They develop a systemic model for each of these outcomes. Each model links structural conditions and/or changes in those conditions with social control.

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processes and, in turn, crime-related outcomes. The authors then closely review the evidence supporting the model for each of these outcomes.

I focus here on the application of the updated ecological model to psychological and social-psychological responses to disorder, more specifically, fear of crime and perceptions of informal control as reflected in territorial cognitions. I suggest we should further differentiate the parochial level of informal control within a neighborhood. This effort builds on earlier work from environmental psychology and human territorial functioning (Altman 1975; Taylor 1987, 1988; Taylor and Stough 1978) as well as from ecology. One goal is to develop a more explicitly spatial framework for understanding local control processes.

Bursik and Grasmick (1993:10) do acknowledge earlier conceptualizations recognizing that people live in nested levels of communities (Hunter 1974; Suttles 1972). At the smallest level, they refer to relationships among acquaintances “based simply on the propinquity of residence and the common use of local facilities” (Bursik and Grasmick 1993:10). They refer to this as the “face block” level of interaction because the physical residential block is a key source of many of these acquaintances. Gans (1967) makes similar distinctions between block and neighborhood ties in his study of suburbanites, suggesting that the differentiation may not be limited to older, denser urban locations.

Nevertheless, these distinctions between the spatially nested levels of interaction made by Hunter and Suttles (and ranging from the faceblock to the community of limited liability), although recognized by Bursik and Grasmick (1993), are not consistently developed in their treatment of parochial informal social control. In the present article, I attempt to elaborate Bursik and Grasmick’s level of parochial control by interposing the street block as a key mediating social and spatial construct. In addition, I elaborate some of the connections linking the control processes and related dynamics at different levels. I use ecological psychology’s concept of the behavior setting to describe the regularities of street blocks.

In sum, recognizing residential street blocks as freestanding social, spatial, enduring units in the urban and perhaps suburban residential environments helps organize our understanding of spatial variations in resident-based informal control. Further, as a mediating construct with related processes, the street block helps us connect individuals and face-to-face groups with broader neighborhood conditions and changes.

To organize our understanding of street block dynamics in a way that is consonant with a broader ecological perspective, I suggest five microecological principles, each directly analogous to a general ecological principle. These help us understand between-block differences in a neighborhood,
block dynamics over time, and connections between a block and the neighborhood setting.

Organization of the Article

The following section recaps some psychological and social-psychological evidence on within-neighborhood differentiation of responses to disorder, perceived control, and problems. Although I touch only briefly on a small number of studies, the evidence noted has proved markedly consistent. In the subsequent section, I suggest reasons why street blocks qualify as behavior settings. Viewing street blocks as behavior settings helps us understand the noted spatial variations in responses to disorder.

To fully understand the overall ecology of responses to disorder, street blocks need to be considered within the context of the overall neighborhood and its position within the broader urban mosaic. To illustrate this point, I highlight a few results showing cross-level impacts on responses to disorder.

To help achieve multilevel integration, I suggest five microecological principles describing on-block dynamics and connections between neighborhood context and on-block context. Each principle is directly analogous to a broader ecological principle used for understanding differences between communities and community-level dynamics. In the final section, I indicate possible points of convergence between the perspective developed here and two current theories on disorder and responses to disorder.

In a brief appendix, I illustrate how a multilevel model of one aspect of informal social control might be developed from such a perspective and translated into a three-level hierarchical linear model. Such a framework represents an example of a dynamic contextual approach (Sampson 1993) to work in this area.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY OF DISORDER: WITHIN-NEIGHBORHOOD SPATIAL VARIATIONS IN RESPONSES TO DISORDER AND TERRITORIAL COGNITIONS

This section briefly summarizes work on the spatial differentiation of responses to disorder, such as perceived problems, fear of crime and perceived informal control, as reflected in territorial cognitions across locations in the residential environment. In the same way that respondents in national surveys report that crime is more serious elsewhere than in their neighborhood or is increasing elsewhere more rapidly than in their neighborhood
(DuBow, McCabe, and Kaplan 1979), they continue to make safety-related differentiations within their neighborhood as they move closer to home.

Most important, closer to home as compared to farther away from home in the neighborhood, residents feel safer, experience fewer crime-related problems, and report being more likely to exercise informal social control (Taylor 1988; Taylor and Brower 1985). Social class, ethnicity, and other factors to be discussed later influence exactly where in the neighborhood residents experience large shifts in perceived control and in the slope of that waxing control.

In many urban residential settings, residents experience markedly different safety when they move beyond their immediate block or from the block to nearby nonresidential locations such as playgrounds or shopping centers (Suttles 1972). We have seen strong and consistent evidence of this in repeated samples in urban neighborhoods of Baltimore, Maryland (Taylor and Brower 1985; Taylor, Gottfredson, and Brower 1981b), and in suburban locations as well (Taylor and Stough 1978). In the latter setting, however, control waned more gradually as residents moved away from the home.

Urban histories of neighborhoods such as Back of the Yards in Chicago between World Wars I and II as well as Greenwich Village during the 1920s describe similar dynamics (Jablonsky 1993:84; Ware 1935). Specific territorial cognitions such as perceived personal responsibility, perceived control, and social legibility all wane as one moves away from the home. Furthermore, the perceived likelihood of encountering undesirable persons or events increases (Taylor 1988). These dynamics are illustrated in the responses, to be described in detail, of 800 residents, interviewed in 1982, living around 24 small commercial centers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota. These spatial shifts in territorial cognition link closely with changes in perceptions of personal vulnerability such as fear and perceived risk (Taylor 1988; Taylor et al. 1981b).

The collective psychogeography I describe here reflects shifts in cognitions of a small group such as a sample of residents on a block or a small cluster of residents on one part of a block. This collective spatial profile, of course, has individual variations nested within it, varying around the central group trend. For example, Resident A, who has a brother living on the next block and spends much time there, will feel safer and more comfortable on that adjoining block than will Resident A's neighbors on his block who visit the adjoining block less frequently. Or, to take another example, a resident who frequently takes his child to the playground in the next block will have a different spatial profile of perceived control than will his childless neighbors. In other words, individual differences in background, in activity pat-
terns, and probably in age and temperament result in individual variations around a shared group profile.

**Possible Explanations for the Gradient Across Locations**

Before explaining variations in declining control and responsibility as one moves away from the home or the home block, how are we to explain the gradient itself? Three possibilities appear relevant. I outline each and note shortcomings. Each may be partially relevant to explaining the gradient and variations in the slope of progressively weakening control as distance from the home increases. But each alone cannot adequately explain all of the spatial features of the collective psychogeography.

*Environmental egocentrism.* First, the gradient could arise from a simple environmental egocentrism, aggregated to the small group level—a home-centric view of safety, control, and responsibility in the residential environment. Such an exclusively psychodynamic explanation, however, fails to anticipate or explain the lability of the psychogeography of perceived vulnerability and control. As will be shown, structural and social conditions influence the legibility, control, and vulnerability gradients.

*Local social dynamics.* A second possibility is that the home-centered legibility, control, and vulnerability gradients emerge from the local social contacts one develops close to home. As Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) demonstrated almost 50 years ago, in a homogeneous residential context one's acquaintances and close friends are most likely to be those nearest neighbors whose paths one crosses most often in the daily round of activity. Although abundant nearby acquaintances may contribute to feeling safer, more responsible, and more in control closer to home, they probably cannot be the sole explanation for two reasons. First, the neighbors one hates the most, as well as the neighbors one likes the most, are most likely to come from close to home (Ebbesen, Kjos, and Konecní 1976). Those living one or two doors down have the best chances of spoiling one's enjoyment in and around one's apartment or home. Local social contacts probably are not uniformly positive. Furthermore, if local social dynamics were the sole explanation, then impacts of broader contextual factors, controlling for on-block social dynamics, should not be apparent. But they are, as will be pointed out.

*Repeated exposure.* In addition to a purely psychodynamic explanation and an explanation based solely on emergent local groups, a third possibility for the contours observed is repeated exposure and liking. We like those we interact with more often, and we interact more often with those we like more (Homans 1950). Psychology attests in numerous experiments, under certain
conditions, to increased liking for stimuli presented more often. Maybe people feel safer, have greater responsibility, and feel more in control on the block because they traverse it more often than they do other parts of the neighborhood or because they see it more frequently or see the people there more frequently. Repeated exposure and greater familiarity undoubtedly contribute to feeling safer on one’s home block. This contribution can be gauged by looking at the effects of length of residence on the differentiation of local territorial cognitions. Later I review some evidence from Minneapolis-St. Paul demonstrating this point. Nonetheless, despite such evidence, the familiarity explanation still is limited because it does not help us understand impacts of broader context on spatially differentiated cognitions.

Limits of explanations. In sum, each of the three arguments explored here may be somewhat relevant for explaining waning perceived control, social legibility, and responsibility as well as increasing vulnerability as one moves away from home. But no one single explanation provides a complete explanation of the spatial differentiation observed and the larger scale factors that might influence this differentiation. I suggest that the ecological psychology concept of behavior setting may help us understand these contours. It integrates the second and third explanations discussed in the preceding, clarifying the roles played by repeated exposure and development of local social contexts. It also helps explain the sharp distinction residents in many contexts draw between the immediate block and beyond. Furthermore, it helps clarify the processes that may be underlying impacts of context on street block dynamics.

**STREET BLOCKS FUNCTION AS BEHAVIOR SETTINGS**

A few scholars, such as Appleyard (1981) and Jacobs (1961), have recognized the central importance of street blocks in organizing life in the residential environment. I suggest here that placing street blocks in an ecological-psychological framework furthers our insight into within-neighborhood differences in responses to disorder in several ways.

**Behavior Settings Defined**

According to ecological psychology (Barker 1968; Fox 1983, 1984a, 1984b; Wicker 1972, 1979, 1987), behavior settings are freestanding “natural” units of the everyday environment with a recurring pattern of behaviors (standing patterns of behavior) and a surrounding and supporting physical milieu. These units organize community life. “Barker views behavior settings
as small-scale social systems whose components include people and inanimate objects. . . . The various components interact in an orderly, established fashion to carry out the setting’s essential functions” (Wicker 1987:614).

Ways in Which Street Blocks Function as Behavior Settings

Street blocks qualify as behavior settings for several reasons.

First, people get to know one another as they pass each other by and observe each other’s routines. They consequently develop positive or negative sentiments toward one another. At certain times or on certain days, they know what others are going to do. Mrs. Callahan will wash her front window on Mondays. On the last day of every month, Charlie will sit out on his porch in the morning to intercept his welfare check. When it snows, Frank will be the first one out to shovel.

Second, there are associated role obligations such as neighborliness (Mann 1954) that go along with being a group member. In a related vein, role differentiation also occurs with some residents playing more central roles, such as block organizer or block busybody, and others playing more peripheral ones in the ongoing life of the block.

Third, unless there are extremely high rates of turnover or extreme block heterogeneity, norms about acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the arena generally are shared. People have some degree of agreement about what is and is not acceptable on the block at various times. Not only will the specific points of agreement vary as a function of locational, social-psychological, and structural factors, but so too will the clarity of those points of agreement. So norms, ranging from clear to diffuse, may be more or less widely shared.

Fourth, blocks exhibit regularly recurring rhythms of activity (Jacobs 1961, 1968). In ecological psychology, these are called standing patterns of behavior or the setting program. People go to work and come home, children go to school and come home, mail carriers and paper carriers make their rounds at certain times of the day, people engage in weekly activities such as car washing and in seasonal activities such as leaf raking, lawn cutting, and gardening. Each block has a more or less regular standing pattern of behavior composed of overlapping cycles, although the pattern may evolve noticeably over a substantial period.

Fifth, the surrounding physical milieu supports and contains the behavior program. In the terminology of ecological psychology, the physical bounds of the setting are the circumjacent milieu. A street block is physically bounded by the fronts of houses, or the alleys or fences behind the houses, and cross-streets. What happens one block over or behind the street block has
much less impact on the block than do activities occurring right there. This is particularly evident when a fire or large snowstorm occurs. The block is a major container, partially partitioning residents from what is happening elsewhere. And the behavior setting no longer can exist if the physical container goes (e.g., urban renewal).

Sixth, behavior settings and street blocks evolve over time. "Settings are continually constructed and reconstructed as new personnel and equipment are added or exchanged for exiting components" (Wicker 1987:616; see also Barker quote at opening of article). Similarly, on street blocks families move in and move out. Houses may become converted to apartments or stores or may be abandoned and torn down. Small stores may come or go, or they may be converted back to apartments. As street blocks change physically over time and/or in terms of their populations, so too may the setting programs change.

Street Blocks as Behavior Settings and Social, Spatial, and Temporal Dynamics

Recognizing that street blocks function as behavior settings helps explain and organize some of the dynamics discussed earlier.

SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

On a block where residents are better acquainted with neighbors, in on-block settings residents experience more control, easier recognition of outsiders, and fewer problems, and they report feeling more responsible for events (Taylor et al. 1991b; Taylor and Stough 1978). This linkage, I suggest, operates because the on-block social ties result in residents better understanding the standing pattern of behavior on the block. They have a clearer sense of the roles played by different persons or families on the block. Although they may have enemies as well as good acquaintances on the block, they develop a more detailed understanding of how the block "works."

Support for this point emerges from an analysis of 1970s survey data in a diverse neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut (Hunter and Baumer 1982). Residents estimated the volume of people passing on the street, in front of their homes, during the day and at night. Those reporting greater foot traffic also expressed greater fear of crime. But the pedestrian volume was not fear inspiring for residents attached to the neighborhood or who could easily recognize who belonged on their street. The authors joined these latter two attributes into an index of psychological integration. I would suggest, in the current framework, that those residents who were more psychologically
integrated had a better understanding of their block’s setting program. This insight buffered them against the fear-inspiring aspects of high foot traffic levels.

In a related dynamic, on-block positive neighboring ties themselves help communicate and maintain on-block setting programs. Casual joking comments about “elephant grass” between neighbors who are on a friendly basis cue a home owner that his or her front lawn is making the block look bad and needs cutting (Gans 1967). Stated more formally, the on-block informal ties can communicate expectations and disapproval about on-block activities that support or challenge the setting program. Ecological psychologists conceptualize the criticism as deviation countering mechanisms, processes that help ensure conformity to the setting program.\(^3\)

Overlaid on these dynamics and further supporting them may be a third, more organized one emerging from a block improvement organization, if one exists. These organizations, widespread in many urban areas, often take it on themselves to help regulate and maintain certain aspects of the block setting program and milieu. They might organize block cleanup activities, organize a group of block watchers to make residents feel safer, or lobby for improved streetlighting, for example. Projects in Nashville, Tennessee, and Brooklyn, New York, have examined the antecedents, concomitants, and consequences of such participatory efforts. (See Florin and Wandersman 1990 for an overview of this work.) Those involved feel strongly that such efforts achieve solid results supportive of the block environment (e.g., Burgess 1990). Broad organizational involvement on a block can support territorial dynamics maintaining the setting (Taylor, Gottfredson, and Brower 1984).

**SPATIAL DYNAMICS**

Understanding that street blocks function as behavior settings helps explain the marked shift in territorial cognitions and perceptions of vulnerability occurring as one moves beyond the block. The marked shift occurs because, especially in ethnically diverse or unstable areas, one has moved from a behavior setting in which one participates and that one understands to a behavior setting that may be much less familiar and less comprehensible. (Again, as mentioned earlier, there will be individual variations around this group tendency.) The shift will be especially marked if the adjoining locations are not uniformly residential but rather are blocks containing commercial or other nonresidential land uses such as playgrounds that draw residents and users from farther away.\(^4\)
TEMPORAL DYNAMICS

The longer one lives on a block, the more one knows not only about one’s neighbors but also about the standing pattern of behavior. Assuming some degree of regularity in the setting program, the block program becomes more familiar and thus more predictable the longer one resides on the block, ignoring for the moment changes that may occur due to turnover on the block or broader changes in the neighborhood beyond the block. With increased familiarity should come clearer recognition of differences between different locations in the immediate surroundings and clearer distinctions between on- and off-block locations.

We can examine these temporal dynamics using survey data from Minneapolis-St. Paul residents collected in 1982 (see McPherson and Silloway 1984 for study details). A total of 24 small commercial centers in the Twin Cities was sampled, and 870 residents living close to the centers were interviewed by telephone. They were asked about territorial cognitions in three locations: directly in front of or behind their homes, farther down the block, and in the small commercial center nearby. Territorial cognitions spanned the three dimensions of responsibility, social recognition, and control-related problems. There were two questions for each of these dimensions. By looking at variations in territorial cognitions across the three types of territories for residents with varying lengths of residence, we can directly see how cognitions change over time.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul survey provided reasonable numbers of respondents with lengths of residence from 1 to 8 years, with more substantial numbers during the earlier years. I randomly assigned residents to a type of territory (near home, down block, commercial center) to ensure that, when contrasting the types, I was looking at differences between people.

Figures 1 and 2 show the results for two territorial cognitions concerned with perceived influence and responsibility: having a lot of say about what goes on and feeling personally responsible for what goes on.

Results for having a lot of say support the suggested dynamics in two ways. First, during the first 3 years, we see increasing differentiation across the three types of territories; the means for near home, down the block, and in the center progressively diverge. Second, perceived say over near home spaces appears to increase after about 4 years (see Figure 1).

Both trends also appear, in slightly different form, for perceived personal responsibility (Figure 2). Cognitions for the three types of settings start out more differentiated than they do in Figure 1 but nonetheless increase in distinctiveness over the subsequent 4 years. And, after about 5 years, responsibility for spaces immediately adjoining the home also increases.
The proposed temporal dynamics surfaced in slightly different form when I turned to other territorial cognitions. Two questions asked about social legibility. The spatial profile for discriminating between outsiders and "people who belong" differed noticeably for 1-year residents versus 2-year residents (data not shown). The latter saw a bigger difference between spaces down the block and spaces in the center than did the former. The same pattern appeared in response to statement, "If a suspicious person is hanging around, someone is bound to call the police" (data not shown). Temporal impacts related to social legibility appear to take place in the first 1 or 2 years of living on a block.

For two territorial cognitions concerned with severity of problems, no clear-cut temporal impacts appeared (data not shown). One item addressed street hassles and the other keeping people out.
Figure 2: Impacts of Length of Residence on Feelings of Personal Responsibility in Near Home, Down the Block, and Center Territories

NOTE: Center territories are located in a nearby small commercial center. These three types of territories are comparable to Altman’s (1975) primary, secondary, and public territories (see Taylor and Stough 1978).

In short, the model being developed here suggests increasing differentiation between on-block and off-block spaces as residents stay on a block longer. These Minneapolis-St. Paul data, which of course must be interpreted cautiously, reveal some support for the proposed temporal impacts. Supporting patterns appear for some, but not all, cognitions assessed.

EXTENDING THE PERSPECTIVE TO CONSIDER TWO ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Recognizing that street blocks function as behavior settings helps to organize and integrate several aspects of what we know about spatial variations in perceived control, responsibility, and vulnerability. But to develop a more complete perspective, we need to consider two additional features of
informal social control in the urban residential environment: structural impacts on the gradients of territorial functioning and spaces between behavior settings.

Structural Impacts

Aspects of neighborhood structure influence responses to disorder, such as fear of crime and perceived risk, as well as perceptions of informal social control (Hackler, Ho, and Urquhart-Ross 1974; Taylor 1996; Taylor and Hale 1984). Less recognized has been the impact of neighborhood structure on the spatial gradient of perceived control and related cognitions. In this subsection, I mention some past work on this point, review some Baltimore data focusing specifically on territorial cognitions, and introduce some Minneapolis-St. Paul data partially replicating the Baltimore results.

CLASS

In lower class as compared to middle class neighborhoods, residents' perceived control and responsibility diminish more rapidly, and their perceived vulnerability increases more quickly, as they move away from the home. In extremely lower class locales, residents may view just the home itself as the only safe "haven" (Rainwater 1966).

The more restricted feelings of safety in lower income and often higher crime neighborhoods result, in part, from a more confused standing pattern of behavior on street blocks in those neighborhoods. We collected extensive behavioral observation data on seven blocks in Baltimore that were either high or low on crime, and we correlated aspects of behavioral profiles with residents' fear levels (Taylor, Gottfredson, and Brower 1981a). We observed that on blocks where the number of men on the sidewalks fluctuated more dramatically during certain weekday time periods, fear levels were significantly higher. These findings suggested that on the high-fear blocks, the standing patterns of behavior were either less well defined or in a state of transition. The more restricted set of safe locations observed by Rainwater (1966) in extremely low income locales may arise in part from the greater variability or lower predictability of the standing pattern of behavior in these locations.

STABILITY

We have investigated territorial cognitions of residents living in stable, predominantly home-owned neighborhoods; unstable, predominantly rental
neighborhoods; and mixed-tenure neighborhoods in Baltimore (Taylor et al. 1981b). Residents were asked about home territories (front steps or yard, back steps or yard), near home territories (sidewalk in front of house, alley behind house), and off-block territories (nearby store, nearby playground). We investigated three dimensions of territorial cognitions: problems, insider/stranger distinctions, and responsibility. We separated residents into those viewing themselves as similar to their neighbors on the block and those viewing themselves as dissimilar. Using a fully between-subjects design, we observed two impacts of neighborhood structure on the spatial gradient of territorial cognitions.

In less stable as compared to more stable neighborhoods, residents reported a higher level of problems in near home territories, the public locations immediately adjoining their residences. Moving away from the home and controlling for on-block social climate, problems increased faster in less stable locales.

In addition, neighborhood stability and on-block social climate demonstrated a conjoint influence on territorial responsibility. Those who perceived themselves as living on a more homogeneous block felt more responsibility about what happened in near home territories if they were living in a stable rather than an unstable neighborhood. Contextual stability, and stronger on-block ties, together permitted more spatially expanded concern about nearby activities on the block.

In these analyses, we observed strong main effects of type of territory with problems increasing, social legibility decreasing, and responsibility waning as respondents considered locations farther from home. We also observed an effect of neighborhood stability on territorial responsibility; it was weaker in more unstable neighborhoods.

I have been able to replicate both the spatial differentiation and some of the multilevel effects by using the Minneapolis-St. Paul data set described earlier. The specific questions asked, and the number of questions used for each dimension, differed from the measures used in the Baltimore study.

As in the Baltimore study, respondents were separated into high-, medium-, and low-stability neighborhoods using a tercile split of percentage residential units changing occupancy between 1976 and 1978. (The survey was completed in 1982.) Furthermore, as in the Baltimore study, respondents were randomly assigned to provide information either about home (public space adjoining house or apartment), near home (down the block), or public (in the commercial center) territories. I was unable to categorize on-block social climate because no questions were asked about that in the Twin Cities survey.

I carried out a $3 \times 3$ Stability (low-, medium-, or high-instability neighborhood) \times Type of Territory (home, near home, or public) multivariate
analysis of covariance, for each territorial dimension, controlling for sex, race, and how far the resident lived from the commercial center. As in the Baltimore analysis, each respondent was randomly assigned to a type of territory, making for a fully between-subjects design.

Summary results appear in Table 1. Across all three territorial dimensions, we see strong effects of type of territory (all p's < .001). As residents move away from the home, problems increase, social legibility decreases, and responsibility diminishes. We also see less sizable, but nonetheless significant, effects of neighborhood stability on all three dimensions investigated. Results again are in the predicted direction, with increasing instability associated with less responsibility, less social legibility, and increased problems.

The specific means for each main effect appear in Table 2. Looking at effects of neighborhood type, we see that for five of six questions, those living in the most unstable neighborhoods reported weaker cognitions than did those living either in moderately unstable or stable neighborhoods; for three of the questions (bothered by undesirables, having a lot of say, and feeling personally responsible), those living in highly unstable neighborhoods reported weaker cognitions than did those living in both other types of neighborhoods. The highly unstable context appears, in several instances, to result in weaker territorial functioning across all types of territories.

Table 2 also shows means by type of territory. For all six items, the public territory is significantly different from both on-block territories, confirming the disjunction between the on-block and off-block spaces in the neighborhood. For five of the six items, all three types of territory are significantly different from each other.

Recall that in Baltimore we observed a Neighborhood × Type of Territory interaction for the problem index, suggesting that near home territories were more like public territories in highly unstable neighborhoods, whereas near home territories were more like home territories in stable neighborhoods.

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul data, we did observe a significant Neighborhood × Type of Territory interaction for the social legibility cognitions (F[8, 1572] = 2.04, p < .05). The univariate interaction term was significant for calling police if someone was hanging around (F[4, 796] = 2.47, p < .05) and marginally significant for distinguishing insiders from outsiders (F[4, 836] = 1.80, p < .07). Inspection of cell means for each interaction term revealed the same pattern as observed in the Baltimore data for problems. In the most unstable neighborhoods as compared to the moderately unstable or stable neighborhoods, near home territories (down the block) had means much closer to public territories (in the commercial center).

Although the specific dimension of territorial cognitions observed varies for this interaction term, in both a large, older eastern city and an upper
TABLE 1: Summary: Impacts of Neighborhood Instability and Type of Territory on Territorial Cognitions in Minneapolis-St. Paul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Insider/Stranger Distinctions</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood instability</td>
<td>$F(4, 1574) = 5.11$</td>
<td>$F(4, 1572) = 2.42$</td>
<td>$F(4, 1658) = 6.99$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Territory</td>
<td>$F(4, 1574) = 12.14$</td>
<td>$F(4, 1572) = 108.76$</td>
<td>$F(4, 1658) = 146.07$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Instability ×</td>
<td>$F &lt; 1$</td>
<td>$F(8, 1572) = 2.04$</td>
<td>$F &lt; 1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Territory</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>$p &lt; .05$</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Results control for three covariates: sex, race, and distance from a small commercial center. All $F$s shown are multivariate $F$s based on Pillai's trace, which is the most robust of the different MANOVA measures. Additional MANOVAs using distance from the commercial center as a separate factor, rather than as a covariate, confirmed assumption of homogeneity of regression. No significant interaction terms involving distance from the commercial center were observed.

In midwestern urban area we see that a highly unstable neighborhood context erodes the gradient of resident-based territorial functioning as well as the overall level of territorial functioning. Because it is near home territories on the block that are influenced, it seems plausible that the street block setting program is affected by the highly unstable neighborhood context.

In short, summarizing the data from both locations, we see the following. Of course, for all dimensions, the previously described home-centered gradients clearly emerge. Furthermore, neighborhood instability influences the level of territorial functioning; all three dimensions were influenced in Minneapolis-St. Paul, but only the responsibility dimension was influenced in Baltimore. In addition, neighborhood instability influences the spatial gradient of territorial functioning. In the Baltimore data, the gradient concerned with problems was influenced; in the Minneapolis-St. Paul data, social legibility was influenced. The pattern of the influence, as revealed by inspecting means, was closely comparable in both locations. I also was able to examine impacts of on-block social climate on territorial functioning in the Baltimore data, but a lack of indicators prevented me from exploring this issue in the Minneapolis-St. Paul data.

In-Between Spaces

Gaps exist between street block behavior settings. In these in-between locations, deviant behavior is more likely to occur and alternate or competing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Neighborhood Instability</th>
<th>Type of Territory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
<td>I’m likely to be bothered by undesirables. It’s hard to keep out people if you don’t want them there.</td>
<td>3.39&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.39&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.87&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.92&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider/stranger distinctions</td>
<td>I can tell people who belong there from outsiders. If there’s a suspicious person hanging around, someone’s bound to call the police.</td>
<td>2.77&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.92&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>I have a lot of say about what goes on. I feel personally responsible for what goes on.</td>
<td>2.39&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.40&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.52&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.39&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Means shown are after adjusting for the three covariates—gender, race, and distance—from the small commercial center. Means on the same row, within an effect, are significantly different from each other if they do not share a common superscript. Throughout, a higher score indicates more social legibility, more responsibility, and fewer problems. For each statement, respondents were asked whether they agreed strongly, agreed slightly, disagreed slightly, or disagreed strongly. A higher score indicates more of a positive attribute (less likely to be bothered by undesirables, easier to keep people out, etc.).
setting programs are more likely to arise. Competing programs arise in these locations because there is less surveillance there by block "regulars"—those stable residents of the block who are committed to and care about having a safe block. These are locations where "marginals"—kids, teens, or adults who do not care about the block setting but rather want to have fun or get high—can gather (Taylor 1987).

Alleys represent a case in point. Granted, in some locations in some eastern cities, such as Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, they represented organized African American communities, dating from the middle of the last century or the early part of this century (Borchert 1980). But in many parts of many cities, they were mostly places for unwanted behaviors. "Alleys were considered a benefit in the overall scheme of urban planning because they routed undesirable functions away from the social center of the residence, the front yard" (Jablonsky 1993:81).

These undesirable functions can be organized into competing setting programs. Jablonsky (1993) describes Back of the Yards in Chicago during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s as well as what went on in the alleys behind the sheds in the backyards:

It was also in and alongside these sheds that the inevitable crap games took place, usually in the early evening on school- and workdays or on Sunday afternoons after church and dinner. Each block had a specific site for the local games of chance. Everyone knew the location, including the police. . . . Understandably, girls and younger children of both sexes were discouraged from playing in alleys and backyards. (p. 83)

Clearly, many activities in these locations were organized like a behavior setting program; they occurred on a regular basis, certain people were allowed to enter and others not, and people knew when they took place. They took place away from the setting program on the block front.

Today in many large cities, alleys are sites where selling drugs has replaced crap games. Realistic police officers accept that these activities will go on in these locations. During the late 1980s, Philadelphia's police mounted a foot patrol initiative specifically focused on reducing crack dealers. One officer commented, "I'm not going to say we wiped out drug sales. What it does is push it back in the alleyways where it's supposed to be. It's not supposed to be wide open" (Carvajal and Loeb 1988:A13; emphasis added).

The officer recognizes that there is a competing setting program, confined to the spaces between the on-block setting programs. We need to develop propositions considering how the on-block setting program may be affected
by these competing setting programs. Some of the microecological principles noted in the following may help in this effort.

**HUMAN ECOLOGY PRINCIPLES AND ANALOGOUS MICROECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES**

**Focus and Rationale**

We can ground an expanded perspective on street block behavior settings by developing microecological principles. Each of these is intended to be directly analogous to a macro-level principle of human ecology. The principles suggested here are intended to help clarify differences between street blocks, relationships between street block setting programs and competing setting programs, and impacts that neighborhood features or changes may have on street block setting programs.

Human ecology focuses on relationships between communities, how those communities and the persons living in them adapt to changes in the larger urban structure, and the interdependence of cultural and noncultural elements of community life, especially the community moral order (Burgess 1925; Hawley 1950, 1981, 1984; Park 1915, 1936; Shaw and McKay 1972). The principles suggested here are intended to clarify spatial differences in the same moral order and how they change over time, but at a lower level of aggregation.

By suggesting that these micro-level principles are analogous to, rather than homologous with, the macro-level principles of human ecology, I am recognizing that the processes behind the micro-level dynamics may be different from the processes supporting the macro-level dynamics. We do not know yet. But by highlighting the apparent similarities between the processes at the two levels, we can more readily understand how neighborhood dynamics influence block dynamics and how differences between blocks may be similar to differences between neighborhoods. The principles facilitate developing a multilevel understanding of distributions of informal social control across locations.

The microecological principles also pinpoint the central role of street blocks, and their setting programs, in linking residents to community dynamics. Urban sociologists generally view neighborhoods and local organizations as structures mediating between urban residents and the larger city. I suggest that nested within communities and community organizations is an additional level of mediating structure. This last level plays central roles in the everyday,
face-to-face lives of residents, roles that may be as important as, or more important than, the functions served by the larger community.

Five human ecological principles, and the suggested microecological counterparts, appear in Table 3. In the following subsections, I describe how each principle illuminates differences between communities and between blocks.

Principles

1. Human groups are organized into natural areas or communities that are similar in some respects to the ecological niches occupied by biota. This is a key axiom of human ecology. Different types of people cluster together in different types of locations. In large U.S. cities before World War II, this was especially true, although the situation has changed somewhat with the rise of urban renewal, centralized city planning, and related developments (Bursik 1988, 1989).

   Neighborhoods are recognizable and have numerous physical and subcultural boundaries differentiating them from one another. Large nonresidential land uses, railroad tracks, major highways or high traffic volume streets, institutions, and major discrepancies in housing stock create shared cognitive boundaries (Crenson 1983; Hunter 1974; Suttles 1972). Those who occupy one niche may be differentiated from those who occupy another niche on the basis of class-related, ethnicity-related, or other factors. Sometimes residents will overdraw the differences between themselves and residents of adjoining locations (Damer 1974).

   The microecological counterpart of this principle contains two propositions. First is the idea advanced previously: The street block serves as a significant container of residential life where local events have the most impact on the household. Face-to-face residential groups are organized into these behavior settings. Street block behavior settings are micro-level niches.

   The second part of the microecological principle states that blocks are differentiated from one another; these differences influence block desirability, the standing pattern of behavior on the street block, and block social climate. A number of physical differences across blocks drive this differentiation. Blocks in a neighborhood exhibit marked variations in traffic level (Appleyard 1981; Craik and Appleyard 1980), quality of housing stock, type of street layout (Brown and Werner 1985), presence of nonresidential and commercial land uses (Baum, Davis, and Aiello 1978; Kurtz, Koons, and Taylor 1995; Taylor, Koons, Kurtz, Greene, and Perkins 1995), and type of adjoining arteries and land uses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological</th>
<th>Microecological</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Humans live in natural areas or ecological niches.</td>
<td>1a. Street blocks serve as containers (behavior settings) of residential life; what occurs there is somewhat independent of off-block events. Residents are more influenced by on-block events than they are by off-block events. 1b. Different street blocks have different characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subgroups are tied to or dependent on the physical climate.</td>
<td>2a. Residents are more familiar with the on-block social climate than they are with the social climate elsewhere in the neighborhood. 2b. Residents become familiar with and contribute to the on-block setting program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Different subgroups are mutually interdependent.</td>
<td>3. Block life is conditioned by features of adjoining blocks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Competition between communities results in a dominance ordering.</td>
<td>4a. Blocks within a neighborhood have varying statuses and desirability. 4b. There is accommodation and sometimes competition between regular and marginal user groups on or around a street block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Homeostasis → change → succession.</td>
<td>5. Homeostasis → change → increased immigration rates → behavior setting changes on some blocks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These physical variations generate differences in street block behavioral profiles and social climate. People are less likely to sit out on higher traffic volume streets (Appleyard 1981) and thus know their neighbors less well on those blocks. On cul de sacs, the lowest traffic volume streets, residents appear to be more socially cohesive (Brown and Werner 1985) and more involved in decorating at holiday time. Nonresidential commercial land uses also result in less sitting out and more social cocooning (Baum et al. 1978) as well as weaker informal resident-based controls and more police activity (Kurtz et al. 1995).

Differences across blocks can result in differences in sentiment as well as behavioral and social differences. These variations in sentiment, as well as the importance of adjoining land use, are illustrated by differences across 3 blocks in Union Square in Baltimore. The neighborhood centers around a historic, one-block-wide city park, with houses surrounding the park on three sides. We interviewed residents on three blocks in this neighborhood in the fall of 1994. Residents on the block right on the square (unit block Stricker) reported the most attachment to their block, ranking 4th out of 96 blocks from
30 neighborhoods on this measure. By contrast, residents right around the corner but off the square, on a block with housing stock in comparable shape (1400 Hollins), ranked 18th out of 96 in attachment to the block. Residents on the block on the square reported more attachment to the block even though they reported more neighborhood problems than did those on the block right off the square. The third block in the neighborhood (1700 Hollins) was two blocks off the square. Housing there was noticeably less well maintained, and three units were vacant and boarded up. There were no vacant houses on the other two blocks. Residents on the third block reported much lower block attachment, ranking 63rd out of 96.

In short, these behavioral, emotional, and social consequences of the physical differences across blocks, as well as the physical differences themselves, make some blocks more desirable places to live and thus higher priced and perhaps more stable over time.

The physical variations across blocks occur within the larger neighborhood context. Those broader setting conditions bound the range of differences appearing across blocks in a neighborhood and the types of blocks that most typically will appear.

The ecological and microecological processes referred to here may influence each other in two ways. A “top-down” influence occurs because the variation within a neighborhood—in traffic volume, housing size, house pricing and quality, nonresidential land use mixes, and so on—provides the distribution of characteristics from which the block in question is “sampled.” In uniform and uniformly residential neighborhoods, such as those that may be found in outer city or suburban locations, variation on some characteristics, such as presence of nonresidential land uses, may be limited or nonexistent. In other neighborhoods, especially those closer to the center of an older large city, variation from block to block on a feature such as nonresidential land use may be much wider.

This top-down influence is illustrated in Figure 3. It shows hypothetical frequency distributions, across four hypothetical neighborhoods, of on-block rates of physical “incivilities,” based on an index of housing and nonhousing conditions. Incivilities include abandoned or run-down housing, graffiti, junk-filled lots, and large amounts of trash. Higher scores represent a higher incidence of physical incivilities. Figure 3 illustrates both the dependence of block on neighborhood setting conditions and the occurrence of between-block differences. In each neighborhood, the arrows point to the particular block scores of three sampled blocks.

Neighborhood D represents a stable, relatively wealthy outer-city neighborhood where houses, lawns, and lots are in good condition. A local organization carries out housing inspections annually and threatens fines.
Figure 3: Illustration of Block Dependency on Neighborhood Context and Cross-Block Variations Within a Neighborhood.

NOTE: On the horizontal axis, four neighborhoods are arranged from left to right in order of increasing rates of assessed physical deterioration. The vertical axis corresponds to counts of blocks within each neighborhood. Within each neighborhood, each “b” points to an incivilities score for a particular block.
Consequently, most blocks have very low rates of incivilities, and there is little variation from block to block. The three scores on physical incivilities (b1, b2, and b3) all are fairly close together, reflecting the homogeneity within the neighborhood on this attribute.

Neighborhood C represents a moderately stable, less wealthy neighborhood than Neighborhood D where organizational control is not as strict. Here incivility rates are low on most blocks (e.g., b4, b5), but there are some blocks where more problems are evident, as shown in the right-hand tail of the distribution and the higher score for b6.

Neighborhood B is an inner-city neighborhood with many deteriorated blocks (e.g., b8, b9), but a few blocks are, relative to the rest of the neighborhood, more problem free, due perhaps to long-standing residents or active block organizations on those sites (e.g., b7).

Neighborhood A is an extremely disadvantaged inner-city neighborhood where serious problems abound on almost all blocks. Any blocks sampled here (b10, b11, b12) are likely to have high incivility rates and will differ little from each other on this index.

In short, the figure displays how one’s chances of sampling a block with a particular volume of physical incivilities is determined by the overall distribution of that attribute within the particular neighborhood. At the same time, within each neighborhood and across blocks, substantial variations on the attribute may exist.

"Bottom-up" influences, in which microecological processes influence the ecological processes, seem less likely but may occur. For example, a neighborhood’s image may improve considerably as a result of residents on one block gaining attention for the older homes. In Union Square, mentioned previously, restoring home owners right around the park spurred initial redevelopment in the area during the 1970s (Crenson 1983), eventually gaining historical preservation status for the wider area. A block in Waverly, a neighborhood near Memorial Stadium in Baltimore, also gained historical preservation status during the 1970s, helping to spur that neighborhood's improvement during the 1970s and early 1980s.

But bottom-up influences may be difficult to maintain. Union Square is a locale surrounded by extremely unstable, disadvantaged neighborhoods. In an interview, the leader there expressed concern about maintaining property values and caring for private units left vacant. In Waverly, city leaders are trying to auction off vacant units to home owners and prevent further decay in the area (Daemmrich 1995). In both locations, the bottom-up influence seems to have lost some momentum, at least when compared to 15 years ago.

2. People are attached to and dependent on the locale that they occupy. Human ecologists and urban sociologists provide numerous examples (e.g.,
McKenzie (1921) demonstrating that people are attached to where they live. Place identification is evident in many cultures (Relph 1976). People may become strongly attached to certain features of the neighborhood (Burgess 1925). The neighborhood meets many basic as well as social and emotional needs (Logan and Molotch 1987), giving rise to its use value. It is no surprise, then, that generally people feel safer in their own neighborhood (DuBow et al. 1979). Of course, socioeconomic factors influence the extent to which a neighborhood can meet the needs of residents, and so people may express less attachment for their community in lower socioeconomic class or less stable locales (Taylor, Gottfredson, and Brower 1985). Attachment is fostered by and in turn influences local behavior patterns, social dynamics, and cognitive mapping strategies.

The corresponding principle for the street block states that residents are dependent on the street block and suggests three aspects to the dependency. First is the simple familiarity discussed earlier. All else being equal, residents will be more familiar with the social and physical features of their own block as compared to other blocks elsewhere in the neighborhood. In addition, emerging from their familiarity with the street block, residents better understand the street block standing pattern of behavior; they develop a clearer understanding of street life for their own block as compared to other blocks. Their dependency includes not only a greater awareness of their own setting program but also a greater contribution on their part to that setting program as compared to the setting programs on other blocks. Furthermore, the dependency includes better recognition of people on their own block as compared to elsewhere in the neighborhood. (All of these block-level trends have nested within them individual variations around the group tendency. So, as noted earlier, there may be individual exceptions to this general trend.)

Finally, and as mentioned earlier, residents generally feel safer on their own block than they do on other blocks in the neighborhood. They experience more say in what goes on, have better recognition of locals versus outsiders, and report fewer problems. For example, as shown earlier in the analysis of territorial cognitions of Minneapolis-St. Paul, residents reported stronger recognition of who belonged on the spaces in front of their homes and farther down the block as compared to the small commercial center itself. They reported the same pattern for keeping out undesirables.

How might processes at these two different levels intertwine? The interplay between the ecological and microecological processes may take compensatory or parallel forms. If parallel processes are at work and are moving toward greater attachment, then positive experiences on the block may lead people to become more involved in the neighborhood, and more attached to
and familiar with the broader neighborhood. A group on the block may decide to begin attending neighborhood association meetings, for example. However, if parallel processes are at work and the neighborhood is experiencing decline in some form, then residents may progressively withdraw from interactions with and reliance on both on-block and off-block neighbors. A general suspicion may influence feelings about and interactions with close neighbors.

Over time in a changing neighborhood, the parallel processes may appear as a sensitization at the block level to processes occurring at the neighborhood level. If a neighborhood is changing racially, then one may be more concerned about incoming residents on one's block and find oneself greeting, for example, a new Southeast Asian resident on the block more warily than one would have formerly. In times of neighborhood flux, one may be more attentive to on-block shifts in housing tenure, upkeep, land use, and population change than one was formerly.

If compensatory processes are at work in a changing neighborhood, then neighbors on a block may work harder to improve block conditions when faced with declining conditions in the neighborhood. In the face of increasing instability or blight, residents may become "extra" vigilant about maintaining order on their block. In our current study of 30 Baltimore neighborhoods, we encountered such a block in East Baltimore Midway. The neighborhood is in the near north section of Baltimore, hosts a large number of nonresidential and large industrial land uses, and is plagued by considerable instability in some parts. Despite difficult conditions, residents on the 2200 block of Cecil Avenue maintain an extremely clean, well-kept block and a sharp lookout. Visits to the block in the spring, the summer, and the following spring showed a long block of row houses almost completely litter free and homes in good repair. Block assessors working on the study team were stopped repeatedly on the block and asked their business.

The general point suggested here about multilevel relationships is that changes at the neighborhood level, influencing people's bond with and dependency on their neighborhood, may translate into parallel processes or concerns at the street block level or may lead to countervailing dynamics at the street block level.

3. **Different groups are mutually interdependent.** Communities are influenced by what is going on around them, and different groups within a niche must accommodate to one another. If an adjoining neighborhood experiences an influx of a new racial or ethnic group, then neighborhood life in the target neighborhood may be influenced (Heitgard and Bursik 1987).

Comparable principles are at work on the street block. If traffic is routed from another street, houses are razed nearby, or a small commercial center
expands on a block two streets down, street life on the target block is
influenced. For example, through traffic is higher on streets near small
commercial centers (McPherson and Silloway 1984), and this influences
residents’ territorial cognitions; burglaries are higher near shopping centers
and schools (Rengert and Wasilchick 1985) because potential offenders use
their travel time to spot target opportunities in nearby areas (Brantingham
and Brantingham 1981). Many aspects of block life are influenced by nearby
land uses and populations as neighborhoods are influenced by their neigh-
boring communities.

4. Competition between communities results in a dominance ordering.
Communities “compete” for access to resources such as high-quality hous-
ing, public service delivery, and proximity to amenities. The initial variations
in fixed resources such as housing quality result from historic land use
patterns, city layout, and ongoing macro-level forces at work in urban areas.
The latter produce changes such as the expansion of the central business
district, the construction of major highways, the construction or destruction
of public housing, and the emergence of new institutions such as college
campuses or hospitals. These variations in fixed resources have been coupled
over time with specific population groups moving into these locations,
differentiated along ethnic, class, and, more recently, sexual preference
parameters (Harvey 1991; Olson 1991; Shopes 1991).

As a result of this spatial sorting interwoven with class, ethnic, and other
subcultural variations, some communities receive more public services than
do others. For example, controlling for incident characteristics, police are less
likely to file incident reports from a victim in a lower status neighborhood
than they are from a victim in a higher status neighborhood (Smith 1986).

Neighborhood organizations are constantly trying to garner more services
for their locale (Crenson 1983). But because public services are limited by
financial and other constraints, these attempts at obtaining more services
involve redistribution and therefore competition for finite resources.

At the block level, there are two microecological analogs to this principle.
First, neighborhood leaders and residents recognize differences between
blocks. Blocks within a neighborhood have varying statuses and reputations
(Taylor 1988:174).

Some blocks may have more problem families, and some may have more
good neighbors; some may have more tenants and owners who take more
pride in appearance; some may have organizations that are broad based,
long-lasting, and effective, and others may have no block associations at all
(Prestby and Wandersman 1985). The variations are recognized by residents
(Damer 1974) and leaders (Crenson, 1983) alike.
Nonresidential land uses, in particular, may contribute to between-block differentials. Blocks with more nonresidential land uses appear to have more extensive physical deterioration, resulting presumably from the heavier traffic on those blocks (Taylor et al. 1995).

Two types of competition between blocks come to mind. First, blocks compete with one another for good residents moving into a neighborhood. As houses or apartments turn over, some blocks attract more desirable in-migrants than do others. In two of the neighborhood examples mentioned earlier, blocks with historic housing (Waverly) and near a park and historic landmark (Union Square) were the first to attract white-collar renovators during the 1970s. Second, blocks compete for the attention of neighborhood leaders, seeking to get their problems dealt with as soon as possible. Leaders may allocate efforts differentially based in part on these between-block variations, working harder on problems in some locations than in others. Over time, the results of this competitive process may widen the differences between street blocks in a neighborhood.

The linkage between the ecological principle and this first variant of the microecological principle probably unfolds over time. As a neighborhood becomes more or less successful at attracting a particular type of in-migrant household due to shifts over time in its position in the urban mosaic, any particular block in that neighborhood will experience a larger or smaller number of potentially in-migrating households, consonant with the current block makeup. For example, if a neighborhood formerly attracted mostly home owners and no longer does so, then a block comprised mostly of home owners will see a shift in its character over time. This shift in block composition may be reflected in changes in the standing pattern of behavior and territorial functioning. A predominantly rental block in the neighborhood, however, would not be influenced by this neighborhood change over time. In other words, there is a cross-level influence moderated by the block characteristics.

There also is a second, more fine-grained microecological analog to this ecological principle. As mentioned earlier, regular residents and marginal users of the outdoor residential space sort themselves out, spatially and temporally. Suttles's (1968) famous example from “Peanut Park” in the Adams area in Chicago represents a case in point. At the interstices of behavior settings, or in portions of those settings where the psychogeography of control is diminished, marginals will carry on their own standing patterns of behavior.

Even in neighborhoods and blocks not experiencing significant pressures toward change, there always is some competition between these two sets of behavior settings. Marginals, whether they be potential offenders, dealers,
high-spirited youths, or addicts, always are seeking locations where they can carry on their activities without surveillance by regulars. But, by and large, there exists a loose accommodation between the two groups of users. For example, a home owner whose house backs onto a pocket playground where teens gather and drink at night may put out a trash can to prevent broken glass on the playground.

This rough balance can be upset, however, by any number of changes. The changes may be intraneighborhood, as when leaders on one block decide to work with police to get pushers and users off of their corner, resulting in more pushers and users a couple of blocks down. Or the changes may be more macro in origin, and it is here that we see clear connections between the ecological changes, such as the recent rise in crack usage in large eastern cities beginning in the mid- to late 1980s, and microecological processes.

In Philadelphia, residents on a street where a “crack house” had been closed remarked that, most important, they could have peace and quiet at night again; the people coming and going as well as the noise at odd hours had been eliminated (Carvajal and Loeb 1988). Reports of efforts to combat crack houses on blocks in other cities such as Cherry Street, a block adjoining public housing sites in a New Orleans, Louisiana, neighborhood (Marcus 1989), reveal similar sentiments of resident relief. “Mr. Robinson, a retired longshoreman, is delighted. ‘I can sit on my front porch again,’ he said” (p. A12).

In short, dramatic intensification of a social problem such as crack use or crack houses expresses itself differentially across neighborhoods, due in part to structural characteristics, and expresses itself differentially across blocks within a neighborhood. The within-neighborhood distribution is governed by factors such as availability of vacant houses or open spaces without surveillance, siting factors, ease of customer access, and levels of individual and collective vigilance and responsiveness on the part of the residents.

On blocks where the problem intensifies, a major concern of police officers and residents alike is that the standing pattern of behavior on the street block has been disrupted; the balanced spatio-temporal sorting between regulars and marginals has been upset, and the viability of the regulars’ behavior patterns, perhaps including porch sitting, has been jeopardized. The loose accommodation has turned to spatial conflict. The purpose of the response to the problem is not to eliminate it but rather to restore the balance between the two sets of behavior programs.

5. Invasion-succession cycles. The last principle covers ecological succession. According to human ecology, populations in a location can change over time. An invasion-succession cycle takes place where new in-migrants supplant the longer term occupants of a niche. The literature on neighborhood
racial change and decline provides some examples of how this may work, although more recent types of change such as gentrification may not follow this cycle (Covington and Taylor 1989).

On street blocks located within neighborhoods experiencing substantial turnover, change may lead to increased in-migration rates for the block and subsequent marked changes in the standing pattern of behavior. So neighborhood level changes set in motion change processes on the block level, the latter constituting the microecological counterpart of this principle.

As households with backgrounds different from those of current residents move onto a block, the new in-migrants may or may not support the setting program. Assuming that older residents talk to newer residents, neighbors probably will try to initiate the newcomers into the program, telling them where to walk their dogs, where to put out trash cans, and so on. But if the households on the block continue to turn over and longer term residents continue to be replaced by in-migrants of dissimilar backgrounds, then the setting program may devolve or at least become more diffuse than it was before. This devolution can take any number of forms. For example, it might include working on cars in front instead of in the alley, leaving trash cans in the alley or out front between collection days, watching television on the front porch rather than in the house during the summer, keeping up houses less well, and so on.

As the setting program becomes more vague, it is more difficult for residents to predict what will happen, when, and where. The rate of immigration and the degree of dissimilarity from current residents are key determinants of the amount and rapidity of behavior setting program change. The ecological framework generally suggests that rapid change may be the most devastating to communities; this could be the case for street blocks as well.

Not all street blocks will be equally susceptible to changes resulting from neighborhood changes. Most vulnerable will be blocks with a larger portion of older, soon-to-depart householders; those with more renters; or those with residents highly prejudiced against the in-migrating group and who can afford to leave. Turnover will take place more rapidly on such blocks, resulting in a speedier transformation of the behavior setting program.

But if the turnover on the block takes place more gradually and with a slower rate of in-migration, then deviation countering mechanisms may be effective in assimilating newer participants into the standing pattern of behavior. Residents may be able to prevent or at least slow the alteration of the block standing pattern of behavior.

The connection across levels exists in that the volume and types of neighborhood ecological change are setting conditions for the microecologi-
cal changes. The number and type of persons moving into the neighborhood represent the pool of prospective new residents available across all the street blocks in the neighborhood. Between-block differences in affordability, attractiveness, and proximity to amenities (discussed earlier) will in part influence how that pool is distributed across blocks in the neighborhood. Stated differently, the extent between-block differences moderate the effects of the neighborhood population change on particular blocks.

In addition to preexisting static differences across blocks, between-block differences developing in response to the in-migration may result in even more strongly marked differences in the rate at which the population is replaced. For example, gentrification may begin to take root on a block in a neighborhood because of the quality of the available housing stock there. In Baltimore, the block on the square in Union Square and the larger houses on St. Paul Street in Charles Village made those locations particularly attractive to gentrifiers. In response to the initial upgrading on a block, other owners on the block may have felt that the time was right to move on and opted to sell quickly. A rapid response to the initial change, especially in the early stages before most of the units likely to turn over have done so, may further moderate the effect of the broader neighborhood change across blocks within the neighborhood. Comparable dynamics may develop in response to racial changes.

**LINKS TO OTHER THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

I comment here on possible links to be developed between the broader perspective presented in this article and specific theories about informal control or responses to disorder. The current perspective may complement or provide insight into a specific model, or it may help further refine that model.

*Routine activity theory* views criminal events as resulting from the juncture in time and space of three factors: a potential offender, an available target or victim, and an absence of capable guardians (e.g., Felson 1986). More recently, Felson has begun discussing the different types of roles played by different types of guardians in producing safety.

I see three potential connections between routine activity theory and the current framework’s treatment of on-block behavior settings. First, the overall setting program shapes who is available to be a guardian at different times. On a block comprised exclusively of “Dink” (double income, no kids) households, no one is available on a typical weekday to oversee activity on the street or to respond to marginals who may be present. By contrast, on a block where one or more adults are at home during the day in many of the
houses, many potential guardians are available. Capable guardians are those enacting the deviation countering mechanisms in the setting, and they must be around to support the setting program.

Not only must guardians be present, they also must be willing to act. They will be more willing to act on a block if it is clear to them that residents are not following the behavior setting program. The discrepancy helps legitimate their actions. On a block with stable households and clear agreement about what is and is not compatible with the block setting program, available guardians can more easily spot activities that should not be taking place. But if the setting program is diffuse or not widely recognized, as it may be on a block that has experienced rapid turnover or has a diverse population of households, then available guardians may be more reluctant to act. They have more difficulty deciding what is and is not permissible in nearby public locations.

Finally, behavior setting theory recognizes that people differ in their contributions to maintaining and running a setting. There may or may not be overlap between the capable guardians and setting leaders. The guardians are those willing to confront potential offenders or troublemakers; the setting leaders are those who communicate the setting program and encourage others to maintain that program. Both roles require that the persons have a commitment to the block and be available for substantial periods of time. But beyond these conditions, the role requirements may diverge, as may the persons filling those roles.

Skogan's (1990) Disorder and Decline thesis spotlights the role of perceived physical and social disorder in accelerating neighborhood decline. His thesis is complementary in two ways to the current perspective. His model focuses on changes over time; in addition, it concentrates on social and physical conditions, termed incivilities. These physical incivilities, such as run-down or abandoned housing and trash-filled lots, and social incivilities, such as public drug dealing or rowdy groups, are disruptive, he suggests, because they inspire resident fear.

The perspective developed here suggests that the fear arises from incivilities because the latter weaken the block setting program. Residents become confused about what will happen and when on their immediate block. It is the consequent devolution and diffuseness of the setting program that contributes substantially to the perceived threat.

Up until now, different incivilities have been treated equivalently. Researchers routinely group them together into broader indexes (Taylor 1995). If incivilities do influence behavior setting programs, and if researchers can learn which incivilities have the strongest impacts on behavior settings, then
policymakers and local activists can use this information to target resources in their efforts to stabilize neighborhoods and blocks.

**SUMMARY**

Sociological work in the ecological vein clearly links ecological change with disorder by means of intervening small-group processes (Sampson and Grove 1989). But as yet it is unclear how influence is transmitted to the small group and individual level. The street block is proposed as a key mediating structure linking neighborhood ecological change and individual and collective responses thereto. A set of microecological theorems grounded in ecological principles may help us better understand multilevel impacts of disorder and the spatial differences in informal social control and incivilities within neighborhoods.

**APPENDIX**

An Illustration of a Formal Model Using Three-Level Hierarchical Linear Models

Three-level hierarchical linear models (HLMs) address two types of research questions: impacts when lower level groups are nested within larger level groups and impacts over time of people within groups (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992:175-96). As an example of the former, a researcher might be interested in the effects of classrooms and schools on student outcomes. The model discussed earlier represents a three-level HLM in which individuals are nested within blocks and blocks are nested within neighborhoods. In this appendix, I illustrate some of the questions pertinent to the proposed framework that could be investigated using three-level HLMs. I do not attempt an exhaustive exposition of all the parameters generated by such an analysis; rather, I focus on examples that might be of interest given the focus of this article.

This hypothetical example considers the following outcome: the social legibility of nearby, public on-block spaces, as perceived by residents on a block. This outcome might relate to behavioral expectations such as a willingness to intercede in an event such as late-night spray painting. Of course, the latter itself might be an outcome. We are interested in an individual-level predictor of length of residence, a block-level predictor of presence/absence of nonresidential land use, and a community-level predictor of neighborhood ethnic diversity. (For simplicity, I limit the example to just one variable per level, but the same logic applies if multiple predictors are used.)

The analysis contains three levels: Level 1 is individuals, Level 2 is street blocks, and Level 3 is neighborhoods. In a three-level HLM model, the coefficients resulting from analysis at each of the lower levels become outcomes to be predicted at the next higher level.
Appendix Continued

There are \( i \) residents nested within each block, \( j \) blocks within each neighborhood, and \( k \) neighborhoods in the study. I assume an equal number of residents on each block and an equal number of blocks in each neighborhood. These equality constraints are not required by the model. Limitations accrue in the model, however, related to the \( n \) of cases at each level.

**Unconditional Model**

We can begin with a fully unconditional model, with no predictors entered (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992:176-78). This model is useful for learning the estimated “true” mean of the outcome, the proportion of the outcome variance that is within blocks, the proportion of the outcome variance that is among blocks within neighborhoods, the proportion of the variance that is between neighborhoods, and the average reliability of the outcome measures across blocks and neighborhoods. This is descriptive information that also may have policy and theoretical utility.

**Conditional Models**

**LEVEL 1: INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS**

Following examination of the unconditional model, we can examine conditional models with one or more predictors entered at each level of analysis.

The Level 1 conditional model, with our one predictor, is expressed as

\[
Y_{ijk} = \pi 0_{jk} + \pi 1_{jk}a_{ijk} + e_{ijk}
\]

(A1)

where

- \( Y_{ijk} \) = perceived on-block social legibility for Individual \( i \) in Block \( j \) in Neighborhood \( k \);
- \( a_{i} \) = length of residence (individual level);
- \( \pi 0_{jk} \) = mean “true” outcome score on Block \( j \) in Neighborhood \( k \) when \( a_{i} = 0 \);
- \( \pi 1_{jk} \) = coefficient (slope) for Predictor \( a_{i} \) (length of residence) in the \( j_{th} \) group of Neighborhood \( k \) (impact of individual length of residence on social legibility in Block \( jk \));
- \( e_{ijk} \) = Level 1 residual or conditional random effect (this error term, one for each \( ijk \), captures individual residual variations around their respective block mean on the outcome).

The researcher can learn whether he or she is justified in allowing the impact of length of residence on social legibility to vary across \( jk \) blocks or whether the impact

(continued)
should be constrained to equality for all \(jk\) blocks. A statistical test of this justification is available. Fixing the impact, or allowing it to vary, would seem important theoretically. The framework being developed in the preceding suggests that block stability generally is important but may have varying importance. For example, one could argue that it would be more important if the block is located within a changing neighborhood; stable blocks help buffer residents from the social confusion in the large neighborhood. I also can see arguing that it would be less important in a fast-changing community. The neighborhood changes might overwhelm whatever order is provided by the block setting program.

The associated coefficient for length of residence, \(\pi_{1jk}\) (which I allow to vary across blocks), tells us the impact of individual length of residence on on-block social legibility. Assuming that length of stay has varying impacts across blocks, I now attempt to learn what Level 2 or block factors determine its impact (slope as outcome). I also want to learn what predicts true block means on social legibility.

LEVEL 2: BLOCK IMPACTS

We have one Level 2 predictor: presence or absence of a commercial or institutional land use functioning on the block, expressed as a dummy variable \(X\). Blocks with stores, small businesses, or institutions score 1 on the variable; others score 0.

Our Level 2 model trying to predict the varying impacts of length of residence can be expressed as

\[
\pi_{1jk} = \beta_{10k} + \beta_{11k}X_{1jk} + r_{1jk}
\]  
(A2)

where

\[
\pi_{1jk} = \text{coefficient from Level 1 analysis (impact of length of residence on social legibility in each of \(jk\) blocks)};
\]

\[
\beta_{10k} = \text{mean coefficient across \(j\) blocks, one for each neighborhood, when \(X = 0\) (the intercept for Neighborhood \(k\) in modeling the block effect \(\pi_{1jk}\))};
\]

\[
\beta_{11k} = \text{coefficient indicating impact of each block's score on the dummy variable \(X\) (nonresidential functioning land use absent/present) on the Level 1 coefficient for impact of length of residence. (This is an impact of a block-level characteristic \(X\) on a block-level outcome, where the outcome in question is a slope. If the coefficient for \(X\) is allowed to vary, then the impact of land use will vary across \(k\) neighborhoods. Stated differently, it captures the difference on \(\pi_{1jk}\) between blocks that do and do not have nonresidential land use.); and}
\]

\[
r_{1jk} = \text{conditional Level 2 error term, representing the residual deviation of each block \(jk\)'s \(\pi_{1jk}\) Level 1 coefficient from the predicted value.}\]
Appendix Continued

The Level 2 model predicting true block mean scores ($\pi_{0jk}$) on social legibility can be expressed as

$$\pi_{0jk} = \beta_{00k} + \beta_{01k}X_{ijk} + r_{pjk} \tag{A3}$$

where

- $\beta_{00k}$ = intercept, when $X = 0$, across all blocks in each neighborhood for social legibility, varying across $k$ neighborhoods;
- $\beta_{01k}$ = coefficient indicating impact of nonresidential land use ($X$) on outcome $\pi_{0jk}$ (coefficient may be fixed or allowed to vary across $k$ neighborhoods); and
- $r_{pjk}$ = residual portion of true block mean, unique to each $jk$ block, after controlling for impacts of residential versus nonresidential land use.

The Level 2 results may address issues raised in the preceding framework in the following ways. Equation A3 informs us of the impact of a block-level predictor, presence/absence of nonresidential land uses ($X$), on a block-level outcome. We would expect legibility to be lower on blocks with nonresidential land use. This is different, however, from a standard regression with aggregated data because the outcome being predicted is estimated true block means, and assumptions are made here about correlated error structures that are not made in ordinary least squares regression.

Equation A2 informs us of a cross-level impact, telling us how an individual-level predictor (length of residence) makes a greater or lesser impact on social legibility depending on the block land use context. For example, length of residence may have a weaker impact on blocks with nonresidential land use. The greater foot traffic may make it more difficult for residents to recognize “who belongs” even if they have been there for a considerable length of time.

**LEVEL 3: NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACTS**

Suppose I have allowed the impact of block land use on the slope of length of residence to vary across neighborhoods and found that this variation is significant. I include a neighborhood-level indicator ($W$) of ethnic diversity in the neighborhood population. We might expect, for example, that in more ethnically diverse neighborhoods, impacts of nonresidential land use, captured with the coefficient $\beta_{01k}$, will be even stronger. Not only are outsiders drawn to the block by the land uses, making recognition difficult and dampening the benefits of stability, but those drawn to the block are ethnically diverse, making recognition even more difficult and making nonresidential land use have an even stronger impact.

The appropriate portion of the Level 3 model for impacts on slopes as outcomes is

(continued)
\[ \beta_{10k} = \gamma_{001} + \gamma_{011} W_{1k} + u_{01k} \]  
(A4)

where

- \( \beta_{10k} \) = for each of \( k \) neighborhoods, average impact (slope) of nonresidential land use on social legibility;
- \( \gamma_{001} \) = average (slope) impact of block land use patterns, across \( k \) neighborhoods, when \( W = 0 \);
- \( \gamma_{011} \) = impact of neighborhood ethnic diversity on the slope of block land use patterns, fixed across \( k \) neighborhoods; and
- \( u_{01k} \) = Level 3 error term, representing the residual deviation of each neighborhood’s slope of block land use not predictable from diversity.

The appropriate portion of the Level 3 model for impacts on means as outcomes is expressed as

\[ \beta_{00k} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{001} W_{0k} + u_{00k} \]  
(A5)

where

- \( \beta_{00k} \) = mean true social legibility in each of \( k \) neighborhoods;
- \( \gamma_{000} \) = intercept of outcome, across \( k \) neighborhoods, when \( W = 0 \);
- \( \gamma_{001} \) = impact of neighborhood diversity (\( W \)) on block social legibility; and
- \( u_{00k} \) = unexplained residual variation in each neighborhood’s true social legibility.

In Equation A5, \( \gamma_{001} \) informs us directly about the impacts of neighborhood context on block climate. But a second cross-level impact also is investigated with \( \gamma_{011} \) (Equation A4), telling us how neighborhood context conditions impacts of block-level factors.

These are just some of the questions that can be answered with a three-level HLM. The analytic framework allows us to model cross-level impacts, using both slopes and means as outcomes, and to observe how much impacts at a lower level (e.g., blocks) vary across higher level units and are linked to characteristics of those higher level units.

**NOTES**

1. Much of the work described here relies primarily on residents’ perceptions of local conditions. One reviewer asked, with regard to these measures, what people are reporting when they talk about other locations beyond their own block. Territorial cognitions are not veridical reports of actual conditions, in the same way that reports about perceived physical problems in a neighborhood are not accurate reports of extant deterioration in a neighborhood (Taylor 1995). The reviewer was asking about the construct validity of these territorial cognitions, and learning
about such validity is an ongoing process (Taylor 1994, chap. 8). Nevertheless, spatial variations in these cognitions do loosely correlate with actual territorial behaviors, such as gardening, and with local social ties. Residents on a block often agree substantially in these cognitions (Taylor, 1988).

2. Many of the examples used here focus specifically on the residential environment in urban locations, often older "rustbelt" cities of the Northeast and Upper Midwest. One reviewer wondered how applicable this framework is to suburban locations or to cities in the Southeast and Southwest that may have markedly different land use patterns. Generalization is, at it always must be, an empirical question (Taylor 1994, chap. 9). So until the work is actually done, we do not know. But generalizability at least seems likely for the following reasons. First, studies of newer suburbs find that the block serves as a key mediating level of social organization, complementing neighborhood-level dynamics (Gans 1967). Second, not all the supporting work cited here comes from the Northeast or Upper Midwest. Appleyard's work in San Francisco is just one case in point. Third, it seems likely that variations in urban form have two effects. Across all the levels of conceptualization discussed here, the form may result in lower levels of local control. If the city is heavily car oriented and people spend less time on the streets, then less familiarity and fewer acquaintanceships probably will result in less control. Furthermore, if the proposed mediating structure, street blocks, becomes less salient, then that outcome can be explicitly modeled in a multilevel format. An example model is discussed in the appendix. In short, my guess—and it is no more than that at this point—is that the proposed framework may apply across a range of regional and residential contexts, both suburban and urban, and that those variations will result in empirical differences we can model.

3. In cases of a block confronted with extremely deviant behavior, residents under some conditions may engage in vetoing mechanisms, trying to remove the person or household from the setting. Confrontational, neighbor-initiated tactics used against crack houses represent relatively recent examples (Weingart, Hartmann, and Osborne 1994).

4. In a pilot interview years ago in Baltimore, we were speaking with an elderly African American residing next to Pennsylvania Avenue, a major commercial strip in West Baltimore that was decaying during the late 1970s, the time of the interview, in part due to the disruption of subway construction. When asked about problems, he replied that there were no problems on his block but that right around the corner people were getting shot and stabbed all the time.

5. The question of constant or varying impact may depend in part on whether the individual-level predictors have been group mean centered, grand mean centered, or not centered at all. I do not discuss the centering issue here. See Bryk and Raudenbush (1992:26-29).

REFERENCES


