Explaining Criminals and Crime

*Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory*

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The Ecology of Crime, Fear, and Delinquency
Social Disorganization Versus Social Efficacy
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Some Background
The Eighteenth Century

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

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

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

1. There were 86 “departments” in France; a few had very high rates, a few had very low rates, and many places were in between. These differences between regions appeared relatively stable over time.
2. Patterns for violent and property crimes differed. Violent crimes were highest in southern rural areas; property rates were highest in industrialized, northern, urbanized departments. Each of these features of local crime rates has proven true in most subsequent research over the past 150 years.

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

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

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

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

The Pattern

In the twentieth century, we continued to examine crime rates (e.g., Coh But they also turned th standing the spatial level—how did it vary: a city, for example? Me discuss was domestic. We get to the Uni want to hear about on Cyril Burt, an influent gist (1883-1971), was ever to be knighted; his fictitious female coat have demolished any him, may have falsifi
The Ecological Fallacy

The Pattern

In the twentieth century, researchers continued to examine regional variation in crime rates (e.g., Cohen and Nisbett 1994). But they also turned their attention to understanding the spatial variation at a lower level—how did it vary across communities in a city, for example? Most of the work we will discuss was domestically produced. But before we get to the United States, you might want to hear about one more European. Sir Cyril Burt, an influential British psychologist (1883–1971), was the only psychologist ever to be knighted; he also published with a fictitious female coauthor, was reputed to have demolished any colleagues opposing him, may have falsified some of his data later in his career and, most importantly for you, is one of the godfathers of the SATs and the GREs (Dorflman 1978).

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

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

Even though later research of individuals continued to find connections between delinquency and social class (e.g., Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981), Burt made two mistakes in interpreting his data. First, he committed or at least came very close to committing the ecological fallacy. He presumed that the relationships he described connecting features of areas also described connections between attributes of individuals. In 1939, E. L. Thorndike, another psychologist, in a two-page journal article showed why this is not necessarily true computationally (Thorndike 1939). It also does not have to hold logically. If poorer areas have higher delinquency rates, this does not mean that because I am poor, or that because I live in a low-income neighborhood, I am necessarily more likely to become delinquent. In short, the connections we find between characteristics of areas do not necessarily tell us about connections between the characteristics of individuals.
In addition, Burt presumed that correlations implied causality. If I find that lower-income areas have higher delinquency rates, this does not mean that their low-income status caused them to have higher delinquency rates. The higher delinquency rates could have caused the lower income level and over time, as households with the means to move left the neighborhood to provide a better setting for their children or left so that they would have a safer, victimization-free setting for their golden years. Alternatively, each could have been caused by some third factor, making their relationship spurious. For example, the racial composition of the neighborhood may have led to a withdrawal of city services over time, such as policing and quality education, or declining commercial interest in the locale, resulting over time in both a lower-income neighborhood and a higher delinquency-rate neighborhood (see Figure 1).

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

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

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

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

With these data, McKay, like Burt, compared their data with community contrasts in Chicago, but also compared their data with children's behavior. Burt's data indicated that delinquency was highest in lower-income areas. McKay's data indicated that delinquency was highest in lower-income areas where there were more commercial establishments, such as bars and pool halls. These areas were also more likely to have lower-quality housing, which may have contributed to the higher delinquency rates.

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

Shaw and McKay collected these delinquency data for many years in Chicago. In addition, they collected delinquency data for the other cities mentioned above and likewise plotted those data on maps, constructing rates for various areas within each city. Not only that, they also spatially plotted other features of the communities in which they were interested, such as the number of housing structures demolished.
With these data in hand, Shaw and McKay, like Burt had earlier, linked delinquency with community characteristics. In contrast to Burt, however, they clearly stated that their interest was in communities, not individual delinquents. They hoped to identify the community characteristics linked to high juvenile delinquency rates.

The Theory

“Classic” Social Disorganization Theory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Figure 2**

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

![Diagram showing relationships between SES Group, Cheapest Area, Economic, Racial/Ethnic Segregation, and Vocational Segregation.]

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

**The Post-World War II Context.** Of course, the spatial pattern described above has shifted markedly in large cities in the post-World War II era. Consider the following (Bursik, 1986; 1989): (1) Centralized city planning increased in the years following World War II. Urban renewal initiatives destroyed vast tracts of older, worn-out housing in older cities and replaced them with large numbers of public-housing communities, built in only small numbers before the war. Many of those displaced from older “slum” locations lost many friends in the process (Frey 1984; Gans 1962). The siting of these communities influenced the surrounding locations, sometimes destabilizing them (Bursik 1989). (2) Suburbanization increased as federal highway initiatives, especially under Eisenhower, provided drastically improved road access to cities. (3) But, for a number of reasons, the suburbanization of African-American households proceeded more slowly than the suburbanization of white households. Consequently, the larger, older cities themselves became increasingly African-American in composition. (4) Passage of various fair housing laws, and related court cases in the 1950s and 1960s, increased African-Americans’ access to housing. In cities where African-Americans had historically been limited to specific sections of the city, pent-up demand resulted in rapid racial turnover in large numbers of neighborhoods.

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

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

**The Central Process**

At the heart of the human ecological model of offense and delinquency rates is a constellation of processes: social disorganization. Its opposite is collective efficacy. A locale is socially disorganized if several things are true: residents do not get along with one another; residents do not belong to local organizations geared to bettering the community and thus cannot effectively address conditions held different values that is not acceptable street; and residents at when they see other engaged in wrongdoing. For example, Johnson, as you can see, the social contains several elements.

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street; and residents are unlikely to interfere

when they see other youths or adults en-

gaged in wrongdoing (Bursik 1988;

Maccoby, Johnson, and Church 1958). As

you can see, the social disorganization idea

contains several themes.

By contrast, if collective efficacy is high in a

locale, residents will work together on common,

neighborhood-wide issues, will get along somewhat with one another, and will take steps to supervise activities of youth or

 teens taking place in the immediate lo-

cale. Collective efficacy refers to several fea-

tures of community social life including

organizational participation (Do you belong to

the local improvement association? Does

your neighbor?) (Logan and Rabrenovic

1990; Portney and Berry 1997; Unger and

Wandersman 1983; Zimmerman and

Rappaport 1988); informal social control (If

your neighbor saw a young teen spray paint-

ing the side of a building about midnight,

would he do something about it?) (Hackler,

Ho, and Urquhart-Ross 1974); and local so-

cial ties based on physical proximity (How

many of the people living on your block do

you know by name? How many can you rec-

ognize when you see them? If you needed to

borrow a tool, could you do so from a close

neighbor?) (Fischer 1982; Hummon 1990).

Researchers have suggested that three lev-

els of resident-based control shape the level

of social disorganization versus collective ef-

ficacy in a locale (Bursik and Grasmick


dynamics within families and between close

friends. If junioretta extorts school lunch

money from two other neighbors while

walking to school and her parents find out

about it, will they punish her appropriately?

Parochial control refers to supervisory ef-

forts made by neighbors and acquaintances.

If a neighbor while gardening out back sees

junioretta walking down the alley threatening

two other children and demanding their

lunch funds, will she grab junioretta by the

ear and walk her home to her dad, or will she,

the neighbor, just shrug her shoulders

and go about planting her tomatoes? How

much parochial control is exercised varies

from block to block in a neighborhood (Tay-

lor 1997b). Public control refers to the neigh-

borhood leadership's ability to garner re-

sources from public and private agencies

outside the neighborhood. Can the commu-

nity association's leaders effectively lobby

"City Hall" for resources for neighborhood

improvements and programs? For example,

can they obtain funding for more school

crossing guards on well-traveled routes lead-

ing to and from the local school? Can they

work collaboratively with other neighbor-

hood organizations on issues affecting their

part of town?

High delinquency rates occurred in low-

income, ethnically heterogeneous, unstable

locations because those ecological charac-

teristics made social disorganization more

likely. In lower-income locales residents' concerns are more spatially circumscribed than in higher-income locales (Suttles 1972;

Taylor 1988). In some low-income neigh-

borhoods, residents feel safe only within their

own dwelling (Rainwater 1966). As ethnic

heterogeneity increases, it becomes increas-

ingly difficult for residents to "decode" what

other residents are doing. There are lan-

guage barriers, and increasing intercultural

distance just makes it harder to figure out

what is going on (Merry 1981). A Cambodian

woman looking out her window at a group of

ten teen African-Americans on the corner

standing around, shouting, and punching

one another may not be sure if a fight is start-

ing or if they are just celebrating Sammy

Sosa's setting a new all-time home run re-

cord. As instability increases, residents have

less time to get to know their neighbors; it is

harder to figure out who belongs on the

block and who does not.

In other words, these structural attributes

of the community either increased or de-

creased the chances that residents would

exert some control over what took place in

their community; these dynamics in turn

would influence outcomes like delinquency,

the local offending rate, and local victimiza-

tion rates.

Note that social disorganization mediates the impacts of community structure on the
Community Characteristics
Other Features
\[ p(\text{social disorganization}) \]
\[ p(\text{delinquency, offending, victimization}) \]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Delinquency and offense and offender rates are higher closer to the city center than farther away, although there are exceptions, and although each of these outcomes maps differently onto spatial structure (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976).

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

Another ecological feature leading away from delinquency and investigated repeat-
edly is religious collective relationships and dance and delinquency of the country when somewhat prevalent. Kent and Doyle (1979) found that hubs of activity outside the pool halls. On the other hand, they are not the same. Religious organizations are not only the most frequent in extremely raged contexts, and collective efficacy is and avoid be (Furstenberg 1999).

Change
In essence, the h focuses on a community larger urban fabric changes over time. It bility, and racial changes in those changes in the crime rates. Here help you think about change.

In 1990, you might have neighborhood in Aja, house value in yo $56,000. At that time, living in Aja was at that value or less. neighborhoods were higher. The house value percentile was higher. In the year 2000, average house hold might still be correspond now to What has happened to the city population with an average house price.

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

**Changes Over Time**

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

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

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

Even though, after controlling for inflation, house values in your neighborhood held steady in the 1990s, they failed to keep pace with house value increases taking place elsewhere in your city. The other neighborhoods have "moved ahead" faster than your neighborhood did in the intervening decade. Maybe some new businesses moving in created strong demand for housing in several other parts of town. Your neighborhood's position has "slipped" relative to theirs, at least on this feature of community fabric.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Centrality of Social Disorganization
Versus Collective Efficacy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Collective efficacy varied significantly from neighborhood to neighborhood, but it also varied between neighborhoods in the same neighborhood. Perhaps most importantly for the human ecology model, even after researchers controlled for the type of people living in each neighborhood, average neighborhood collective efficacy was linked to features of neighborhood fabric. For example, it was weaker in poorer, less stable, and more immigrant-dominated neighborhoods.

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

Extending the Model to Fear and Other Reactions to Crime

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

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**Figure 4**

*Initial and Revised Human Ecology Process Models*

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

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

Extensions to Signs of Disorder

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

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

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

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

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

The only part of this theory that has received strong, consistent support is the psychological version. Those who, at one point in time, perceive more problems than their neighbors, are indeed more concerned about their personal safety and more desirous of leaving their neighborhood (Perkins, Meeks, and Taylor 1992; Perkins and Taylor 1996; Taylor 1997a). At the neighborhood level, disorderly social behavior and physical deterioration might mediate or carry the impacts of neighborhood structure or changes in structure on fear of crime (Covington and Taylor 1991; Skogan 1990; Taylor and Covington 1993). But deterioration does not make its own independent contribution (Kurtz, Koons, and 1998). In part, this is so strongly driven by the neighborhood structure (Taylor, Shum 1985).

Implications for emerging from the prove straightforward approach has been the recognition programs for who, notably in the origin, launched in the 1930s, Shaw himself (Lab development program) increased organization; groups, strengthen i youth, teach youth’s alternatives to troublesome programs all today (Podolefsky 1996).

Space limitations on whether or not programs programs' objectives. But the here is that accordin spective suggests change the potential also can shape his o.

A second, perhaps implication emerging the importance of repeatedly, analyses of independent impact on local social eff and, in turn, on crimin oncomes. Neighbors often disrupt lo mal supervision of large numbers of lo projects increase the coming delinquent ners would do well to might be accomplis
social and physical conditions include being talked about, public drug sales or king or drunkenness, physical conditions in-litter, graffiti, abandoned cars, weedy voids, and disrepair.

paying attention to the conditions of the neighborhood (Hope and Hough 1988; Taylor, Shumaker, and Gottfredson 1985). Implications

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

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

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

Notes

1. For a pretty humorous perspective on this era, see Danny Kaye in The Inspector General.

2. Creuse is an agricultural section in central France. Corse is an island in the Mediterranean 105 miles south of France.

3. The anticipated follow-up volume, The Old Delinquent, did not appear.

4. Actually, we're pretty sure it was his coworkers and students who did the actual work.

5. A relationship is cross-sectional if the correlation is between two variables measured at roughly the same point in time. But correlation does not prove causation. Just because beaches near the shore that have higher volumes of ice cream sales have more drownings per month than beaches with low ice cream sales, that does not mean the ice cream sales cause the drownings. Nor does it mean the reverse. A relationship is longitudinal if one variable, the predictor, is measured before the other variable, the outcome. Then, depending on a range of factors, the researcher may be able to make the case that one variable causes the other.

6. If you have not yet had a course in juvenile justice, except for offenses where a juvenile is tried as an adult, juvenile crimes and acts of delinquency are handled through a separate court system, usually called family court. A juvenile brought before the court can be "found delinquent" by a master or judge, which means that he or she agrees the juvenile did commit a delinquent act or a crime. Delinquent acts include many activities that are permissible for adults, such as drinking, but also include a special class of actions that make sense only for juveniles, such as defying authority figures. In the Shaw and McKay data, we do not have a breakdown on the specific type of offense for which the juvenile was found delinquent.

7. See Bursik and Grasmick (1993), pp. 30-31, for details.

8. I have never known any graduate student who protested that he or she was paid fairly or was overpaid.

9. These 75 natural areas are larger in size than the neighborhoods typically found in many cities, either at that time or now. For example, Roderick McKenzie, another Chicago sociologist who went on to Ohio State, researched...
neighborhood associations in Columbus (OH). He found that four out of the five community groups that he studied comprised just a few blocks along a major street that had a trolley car running on it. Al Hunter and others have suggested that in defining the natural areas in Chicago the researchers tried to impose some uniformity on the variations in community size.

10. Growing CBDs were a feature of large cities in the first half of the twentieth century. This was less true in older cities after World War II as they stopped growing and began losing population, and as automobile and truck transport superseded rail.

11. The important exception here is for African-Americans, who, despite relatively long tenure in many large U.S. cities, remain a highly segregated population, with substantial numbers limited to extremely low-income locations. Some, such as William Julius Wilson, have suggested that their concentration in poor, urban locations has increased since 1970.

12. These percentile scores are just like SAT scores. If your SAT Verbal score put you in the 98th percentile, it means that 98 percent of those taking the test had a score equal to or lower than yours.


14. For example, suppose I wanted to find out what class in your major was hardest. I could take the grade in each section in each class last semester, save just those class averages, and throw away the individual information around each of those averages. I have aggregated the class grades. I can then use the lowest class average to decide which class was hardest.

15. The researchers know the connection is mediated because they do the following checks. When they put in the community structure indicators by themselves, they have a big impact on the outcome. But when the then add in the mediating variables, like perceptions of annoying teen groups, the influence of the community structure indicators weakens.

16. Neighborhood clusters were smaller than the 75 Chicago "natural areas" often used by Chicago researchers, but also more homogeneous.

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

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