
In chapter six, Shaw and McKay focus their efforts on describing “the perturbing influence of other variables” in the stuffy of neighborhood variation in delinquency (p 141). Specifically, they focus on three classes of variables: physical status, economic status, and population composition. An example of a physical status effect is that the highest rates of delinquency are found in/around industry and decreasing population is related to increasing industry and this situation is conducive to delinquency. Economic status is seen in areas with the lowest rental which have the highest delinquency rates. Also correlated with delinquency is relief assistance. But they note that the relief does not explain delinquency. Rather, economic factors distinguish areas from each other and low levels relative to other areas seems related to delinquency. For composition effects, Shaw and McKay note that both blacks migrating north and immigrant groups are in the same position of groups of low economic status adjusting to a new environment. Table 46 on p 156 is especially telling. It shows how population compositions in certain neighborhoods changed completely from 1884 to 1930 but that delinquency rates were relatively stable. They note that there is a continuum of delinquency within racial/ethnic groups and that similarly situated blacks and whites (those in the lowest economic levels in most deteriorated places) both have the highest levels of delinquency. They then turn in the next chapters to describing the mechanisms for these associations.

Chapter seven opens with a discussion on differential values across communities. Shaw and McKay propose that “in the areas of low rates of delinquents there is more or less uniformity, consistency, and universality of conventional values and attitudes with respect to child care, conformity to law, and related matters; whereas in the high-rate areas systems of competing and conflicting moral values have developed” (p 170). They discuss further that this similarity of values in middle-class areas exists and is expressed through institutions and voluntary associations which are “designed to perpetuate and protect these values” (p 171) whereas children in lower-class areas are exposed to a variety of values and behavior patterns from strictly conventional to directly oppositional (here they reference Sutherland’s differential association). This is important because they consider delinquency group behavior where similar groups form and are maintained over time, regardless of composition (which is why certain types of delinquency are common to certain areas). They illustrate these delinquent associations through three case studies. As explanations, Shaw and McKay give reasons why differential social organization occurs, citing the ineffectiveness of the family (in several ways), lack of unanimity of opinion and action (the result of poverty, heterogeneity, instability, nonindigenous agencies, lack of vocational opportunities). These problems are exacerbated for blacks because of segregation.

The summary in Chapter 12 is pretty straightforward, but I’ll highlight some of the major and most relevant findings. First “juvenile delinquents are not distributed uniformly over the city of Chicago but tend to be concentrated in areas adjacent to the central business district and to heavy industry areas” (number 1) with wide variation in rates between areas (2) and rates are inversely related to distance from the city center (3), a process closely related to city growth (6). The areas with high rates of delinquency have been characterized by high rates over time (4) and is highest in areas characterized by physical deterioration, decreasing population, heterogeneity, and adult
crime (7). Several explanations account for high rates of delinquency including community failure in effective social control (8), social disorganization (9), and “traditional” delinquent behavior (10). Delinquency rates remained high in high delinquency areas even as racial and ethnic compositions changed almost completely (12). The descriptions given above are confirmed in six other cities (14, 15). In explaining delinquency as traditional behavior in certain areas, Shaw and McKay show that delinquency is group behavior (16) that is transmitted through contacts (17) and a delinquent code is acquired through these contacts (18). But, “participation in the activities of delinquent groups often serves to satisfy the fundamental human desires of the boy in the delinquency areas of the large city” (19).

Overall, it appears Shaw and McKay value the social control mechanisms as well as the social learning mechanism that lead to neighborhood variation in delinquency.
In this chapter, Kornhauser focuses on Shaw and McKay’s social disorganization theory which she recharacterizes as a control model (following her scheme in chapter 2). In order to recast Shaw and McKay, she focuses first on Thrasher.

According to Kornhauser, Thrasher’s theory of gang formation is a control model. Thrasher argues that weak social controls resulting from social disorganization lead to gang formation. Gangs are formed to establish a social organization that will provide for members’ needs. In recounting Thrasher’s theory, Kornhauser makes several points about the social structure of gangs and the processes that account for it. These include: 1) gangs have loose social structure; 2) conflict is the most important process in accounting for development of gang structure; 3) gang integration through conflict; 4) smallness (a feature of primary groups); and 5) institutionalization. The model is one in which ineffective institutions lead to a lack of control which in turn leads either directly to delinquency or indirectly to delinquency through gangs. Kornhauser contends that a gang, therefore, is a primary group, formed to impose order and not a coherent structure in which members share norms and values.

After her discussion of Thrasher, Kornhauser turns to Shaw and McKay. She admits their work clearly points to a mixed model to explain the connection between social disorganization and delinquency. Specifically, she points to the elements of delinquent subcultures in their work, as well as those regarding social control—these factors play into what she calls their mixed model. She asserts that these two perspectives cannot exist in a single model (as discussed in chapter two) because of conflicting assumptions about human nature and socialization.

Consequently, Kornhauser constructs an argument for interpreting Shaw and McKay’s mixed model as one purely of social control. In this model, community contexts and the social characteristics of individuals lead to weak social controls. Weak controls lead directly to organized adult criminal activity, delinquent companions and delinquency in general. Delinquency, she notes, also results indirectly through weak controls to delinquent companions.

Community contexts include economic indicators, residential mobility and heterogeneity. These contribute to the cultural characteristics that cause social disorganization (which is essentially structural). Communities suffering from structural disorganization are characterized by institutions which lack the money and skill to achieve goals—institutional instability and institutional isolation. The combination of these many population and structural factors account for the differing degrees of control that explain variation in delinquency.

Finally, Kornhauser engages in a discussion of the problems associated with testing her control model and the research results of studies that have attempted to do so. She concludes that neighborhood economic status has the greatest impact on neighborhood delinquency rates. She also maintains that some support exists for finding a correlation between both mobility and heterogeneity and delinquency. She points to the need for more serious research into the part structural variables play, the actual content of social disorganization, and the relationship between social disorganization and social controls.
Kornhauser’s work in this chapter is important for several reasons. As noted, she points out the contradictions in the assumptions of Shaw and McKay’s work on subcultures and social control as being a mixed model theory. She also makes an effort to debunk the critiques of circularity of their argument. Importantly, she paves the way for the newer models of social disorganization theory. However, there are drawbacks to what she has done to Shaw and McKay’s work. Reviewing their work makes clear that they were, in fact, leaning much more toward a social learning/subculture explanation than a control model. Kornhauser’s work has partially led us away from what may have been a rich vein of knowledge as she presents not a clear explication of their work but rather a her own construction of their model. For better or worse, Kornhauser’s work resurrected Shaw and McKay and social disorganization theory in general and opened the door for the wealth of theorizing, researching, and programming in line with the social control model.
In this important article, Sampson and colleagues develop a testable model of the main tenets of social disorganization. They begin by stating their premise (following Kornhauser) that variations in crime rates across neighborhoods are due to social and organizational characteristics of the neighborhood itself and not just the aggregated individual characteristics of the residents.

Next they lay out specific definitions of the concepts they model and their hypothesized relevance to neighborhood crime rates. They define social control as “the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles—to realize collective…goals” (p 918). They propose collective efficacy as a mechanism by which neighborhoods achieve social control. Basically, collective efficacy is the combination of mutual trust and cohesion with the willingness to intervene for the good of the collective. The authors hypothesize that collective efficacy will mediate the effects of important neighborhood-level variables. Specifically, collective efficacy should mediate the negative effect of residential stability and the positive effect of concentrated disadvantage on crime (measures shown by others to have significant effects on neighborhood crime rates).

Using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, Sampson et al use hierarchical modeling to test their model. Their sample consists of 343 neighborhood clusters (each of about 8000 residents) and 8782 residents of these neighborhoods. They have three measures of their dependent variable: violence in neighborhood, personal victimization, and homicide. They measure neighborhood-level variables using census data and following previous measures create variables for concentrated disadvantage, immigrant population, and residential stability. Finally, they measure collective efficacy by combining two scales: informal social control (5 items, Likert scale on intervening behaviors) and social cohesion and trust (5 items, Likert scale on willing to help, close-knit, trust neighbors, get along, share values).

They find significant correlates of individual characteristics to collective efficacy, but more importantly, they find that stability (+), disadvantage (-) and immigrant population (-) are related to collective efficacy and together explain 70% of the variance in collective efficacy between neighborhoods. And, while there are individual correlates to reported violence, they find that collective efficacy partially mediates the effects of disadvantage, stability, and immigrant populations on all three measures of violence. To test the robustness of their findings, they control for prior homicide and collective efficacy remains significant in all models. Additionally, they add other correlates of collective efficacy to the models (friendship and kin ties, neighborhood services, and organizational participation) and find that collective efficacy is still the largest predictor of violence. Finally, they run the models for only neighborhoods with 75% or higher black populations and collective efficacy remains highly significant. In this way, the authors have shown that the effect of neighborhood compositional characteristics and violence operate through collective efficacy.

Sampson, Raudenbush, Earls (1997) model:

- Concentrated disadvantage
- Immigrant concentration
+ Residential stability

Collective efficacy

Crime, violence

Previous research, particularly ethnography, has focused on black under- or lower-class at the neglect of the larger black population that is not poor. Patillo places her work in two arenas: neighborhoods differences based on race and social (dis)organization. Of the first, she describes Groveland, a black middle-class neighborhood in Chicago’s South Side with its own and its neighbors’ racial composition over 90% black. She suggests that black middle-class neighborhoods differ from white middle-class ones because: the black middle-class looks like the white lower-class; black middle-class neighborhoods are more often surrounded by lower-class neighborhoods; black neighborhoods in general exist in separate, segregated areas of Chicago (and other cities). In linking this to her second arena of focus on social disorganization, she shows how existing theories of neighborhoods and crime have difficulty dealing with issue of relatively stable neighborhoods that have high crime rates.

To answer this issue, she turns to a particular model of social disorganization, the systemic model (Bursick and Grasmick 1993). Bursik and Grasmick argue that social disorganization is the ability of local residents to regulate behaviors in achieving a common goal of a crime-free neighborhood. The systemic model assumes that “the capacity for such regulation is determined by the extensiveness and density of the formal and informal networks within the neighborhood” (p. 4). (See Notes below for model). Patillo suggests that not all networks work to facilitate social control. The purpose of this article is to show how dense social networks have positive and negative effects for social control (and subsequently for crime).

Data were gathered through Patillo’s (and another fieldworker’s) efforts in the Comparative Neighborhoods Study conducted by the University of Chicago and through her own in-depth interviews following her participant observation period. Her findings are consistent with her hypotheses in showing that neighborhood networks have both positive and negative effects on social control. Below I highlight some of these findings and Patillo’s examples.

First, she suggests that more supervision (in multiple contexts) is not always better. Examples of this include her details from interviews with a local pastor suggesting that multi-generational and grandparent-only household can lead to breakdown in control. Also, she quotes one woman’s unwillingness to go to the police with reports of “gangbanging” “‘because his mama is such a sweet lady” (p 763).

In contrast, dense networks lead to some positive effects, as well. Patillo’s examples of this include Mama G’s and Spider’s actions to informally control suspicious behaviors on the street and in the gym.

Finally, she cites areas where licit and illicit activity and people work together or are one in the same. She alludes to the presence of gang members in the park serving to minimize problem behavior and in the neighborhood in general to keep drug pushers and drug houses out. She puts forth Lance as an active agent in social control and community activism yet is the leader of the Black Mobsters gang. Included here also is her example of Brandon whose funeral brought in members of his youth group at church, his sports teams, but also his gang affiliates.
Overall, Patillo’s article points to the difficulty residents face in reconciling the good that gangs and gang members do for the community (providing security and providing for families) with the illegitimate means used to achieve these contributions. Adding to this is the fact that gang members are long-term and active members of the community (with ties to others, to schools, and to churches) and thus contain their delinquent/illegal activities to outside the neighborhood and within the context of acceptable middle-class behavior.

Patillo concludes by summarizing that neighbors’ strong ties in Groveland facilitate formal and informal control but also thwart efforts to totally rid neighborhood of gangs and drugs. She recognizes her own contribution to social (dis)organizational theory (specifically to the systemic model of social disorganization) that “dense…ties and institutional strength and participation allow for the integration of licit and illicit networks both working toward common goals, but with variant strategies” and to “ameliorating the dearth of research on the black middle class” (p 770).

Notes:
The basic model of Bursik and Grasmick (1993) (shown in detail on page 39):

Clear et al attempt to add to the existing notions of social disorganization by testing Rose and Clear’s (1998) hypotheses about the disorganizing aspects of incarceration. The authors begin by reviewing some of the work done in social disorganization, specifically noting a lack of consideration of public policies being antecedents (rather than responses to) crime in neighborhoods. Moreover, the note that Bursik and Grasmick’s (1993) systemic model of social disorganization includes both formal and informal social control but that theorists (Sampson and colleagues, Bellair) address only informal social control.

In laying out their proposed relationship between incarceration (“coercive mobility”) and crime, Clear et al note that mobility has been shown to be an important link in the relationship between neighborhoods and crime but that considerations of incarceration as a type of mobility are relatively new. They cite statistical estimates for 2002 of ~600,000 prison and 10 million jail releases. These rates vary by neighborhood as neighborhoods are segregated (lifetime incarceration rate for black males is 28% but varies substantially by neighborhood). The link between incarceration and crime is through a systemic model of social disorganization in which incarceration leads to disorder and disorganization through removing supervision of youth, depleting already low resources of family remaining in neighborhood, damaging social networks and in general undermining informal social control. For these reasons, the authors (following Rose and Clear 1998) hypothesize that the relationship between removals/admissions [to jail or prison] differs by neighborhood and that the relationship between release and crime is curvilinear (first negative and the positive).

They test their hypotheses using data on 80 neighborhoods in Tallahassee, FL using data from the TPD, the DOC, and the 1990 census to measure effects of release and admission in 1996 on crime in 1997 using negative binomial models. Note that the authors address multiple methodological problems including multicollinearity and outliers.

Results show predicted effects of standard social disorganization variables on crime. These effects are mediated by the inclusion of incarceration effects. Specifically, they find no effect of releases on crime (the following year) and no significant linear effect of admission on crime but squared term is negative and significant and cubed term is positive and significant. The authors find evidence for a tipping point effect beyond which additional incarcerations no longer reduce (and may even increase) crime.

In concluding, the authors place their work in the formal social control aspects of social disorganization. They suggest that the jury is still out on the broken windows notion of crime reduction but that there is growing evidence that increasing formal social control may decrease informal social control and that crime-control policies (specifically the penal trend of increased incarcerations) may be counterproductive to their goals of reducing crime.
Questions

1) Shaw and McKay seem to value both differential association and social control as mechanisms that lead to variations in delinquency rates. Do you think Kornhauser is correct in paring down their model to a purely control theory? What are we losing? It seems to me (given the selection we read), that Shaw and McKay focus more on differential association but because of Kornhauser, we refer to them most in the context of social disorganization.

2) I tried to briefly describe what I know about the systemic model of social disorganization (as cited in Patillo and Clear et al) and I gave you my prior attempt at drawing out Bursik and Grasmick’s model and Sampson et al’s model. What do the models look like in the readings for this week?

3) What are the major criticisms of social disorganization theory? Is social disorganization limited to place (as Shaw and McKay suggest) or is it more relevant in terms of social networks of residents (as Patillo describes)?

4) Patillo’s article is the first qualitative piece we’ve read this semester. How do qualitative studies help in our understanding of crime and specifically in our understanding of the relationship between neighborhoods and crime?

5) What are other methodological issues in studying neighborhoods and crime? (I’m thinking here about problems like those in Clear et al of outliers being statistically hard to deal with yet substantively important).

6) We didn’t read any Wilson or Massey and Denton or other well-known neighborhood studies. How do these fit in with the social disorganization model?

7) Given the Clear et al piece and the Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls article, what might programming look like that could effectively reduce crime in disadvantaged areas?

8) Social disorganization theory has been used to study the neighborhood effects on other outcomes (such as Mirowsky and Ross’s work on neighborhoods and health). And attempts have been made to apply other theories to the neighborhood level (Agnew’s community strain model). Does (or rather, why does) social disorganization have a monopoly in explaining neighborhoods and crime? Does the fact that it is applied to other phenomena strengthen or weaken it? Is the it a passing phase as it has been in the past?