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Numerous studies have investigated the structural causes of crime, but findings reveal significant inconsistencies across studies. Researchers often rely on social disorganization, collective efficacy, and strain frameworks to explain the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and ecological measures of crime. Following this design, I contend that these theoretical frameworks conceptualize socio-economic disadvantage and its effects differently. Using the National Neighborhood Crime Study (NNCS) data supplemented with Census data, I estimate separate effects of various measures of socio-economic (dis)advantage on neighborhood homicide, robbery, and motor vehicle theft. Subsequent regression analyses show that several indicators of socio-economic disadvantage predict violent and property crime, although a combined disadvantaged index including neighborhood-level measures of family, employment, and economic factors is shown to be a more consistent and robust predictor of all three crime outcomes.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CRIME ACROSS LARGE, URBAN AREAS

by

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

To my mother, thank you for always demanding integrity and humility.

To Emily, thank you for your constant support and encouragement. You are as graceful

and compassionate as you are kind.

Finally, thank you to Dr. Sarah Daynes, Dr. Cindy Dollar, and Dr. Saundra Westervelt for

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This thesis written by Jon K. Tostoe has been approved by the following

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial debates in modern criminology has revolved around the relationship between social class and crime. People who live in poverty or who are considered "lower" class or poor have long been accused of committing more crimes than people of a higher class status. National crime statistics, which began to surface around the early 1800's in France, attempted to connect crime and criminality to economic conditions, but found mixed results. Since then, hundreds of other empirical studies have been done worldwide claiming to show a direct line between crime and social class. In fact, up through the mid to late 1970's, research suggested that those who lived in communities that were lower in overall socioeconomic status were more likely to commit crimes, and areas that have a higher percentage of lower class persons are characterized by higher rates of crime (e.g., Shaw and McKay 1942).

Studies supporting claims that poor people were dangerous led to a vicious cycle of bigotry and unconscious discrimination against poor individuals in the United States. However, over the past few decades, research in criminology has raised questions about whether poor people are more likely than those who aren't poor to commit crimes. In fact, complexities around the class-crime connection have left criminologists with more questions than answers. As reviewed in the subsequent chapters, research often suggests

that no individual-level link between social class and criminal participation exists. These results contradict the idea that poor people commit crimes than those in other classes.

Crime is now commonly considered the result of a certain set of ecological, structural processes that lead to economic isolation, deprivation and/or inequality. Such conclusions beg an aggregate analysis of the socioeconomic-crime link. My research examines the relationship between social class and crime *at the aggregate (structural) level*. This project proposes to answer the question, what socio-economic factors best explain crime across large, urban areas?[1]

Structural Causes of Violent Crime

To be clear, aggregate structural criminology studies not only *where* crime exists, but also *why* crime exists in these places. In fact, an enormous amount of research has devoted itself to discovering the underlying causes of crime. Among the many hypothetical reasons for the occurrence of high crime rates are two central causal mechanisms: individual causes of crime and structural causes of crime. Individual-level causes of crime are important in that they inform us about social-psychological causes, but structural explanations of crime recognize the power that institutions play in shaping

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[1] Historically, not only have poor people taken the blame for higher crime, the rise of the Reagan era and subsequent war on drugs placed an almost equal share of the blame on people of color. According to this assumption, people of color commit more crimes than do white people (Alexander 2012; Beckett 1997). Moreover, areas with higher concentrations of blacks have higher rates of crime than majority white areas. (Peterson and Krivo 2009) The problems that these assumptions about crime created are great and varied, but a couple main theoretical problems emerged. One such problem is that if black people live in impoverished areas in higher concentrations than do whites, is their race a predictor of crime, or is the fact that they are economically disadvantaged the primary link to crime? In other words, is race or socio-economic status a more important factor in predicting crime? Though the connection between race and crime is a fascinating one, it is complicated in its own right. In an attempt to maintain a focus on structural economic inequality, this review will focus specifically on the connection between crime and socio-economic status, although as shown in subsequent chapters, I separately assess aggregate measures of race and socio-economic predictors.

the social dynamics that create opportunities for crime. As mentioned earlier, studies examining individual class-crime relationships are tenuous. Claiming that individuals are inherently criminal and are motivated towards crime and deviant behavior is not representative of the larger, social-structural factors at play in society and can lead to sweeping generalizations. Individual-level causes of crime are important to consider, but are not the focus of this research, which centers on structural causes of crime and the structural covariates of crime.

Structural causes of crime place emphasis on the complex spatial and politico-economic dimensions of an area in attempting to explain why crimes are committed. A structural argument, for example, claims that areas with limited economic, political, or cultural resources increase pathological behaviors, including crime. In short, structural arguments focus on the systemic cause(s) of crime, not on the individual-level causes of crime.

In the following chapter, I will review two main theoretical perspectives often used to examine this issue. In Chapter 3, I provide a review of the literature on ecological causes of crime. In Chapter 4, I detail the data and methods I use to examine structural connections to economic conditions and crime across large, urban neighborhoods in the United States. Chapter 5 reports the results of my analysis. Finally, I close by summarizing and discussing the implications of the present findings.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Below I elaborate on three specific and important theoretical frameworks within criminology. For each one I will show how they rely on key socioeconomic factors that predict crime, not at the individual, but the ecological level. As should become clear, the emphasis that these frameworks place on socioeconomic issues vary slightly in their application to the production of crime, but they are all consistent in holding socioeconomic factors as important.

Social Disorganization Theory

One theory that has tried to explain the class-crime relationship is social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory is a macro-level theory explaining structural processes that account for variances in crime rates across different communities. Shaw and McKay (1942) are attributed with the development of social disorganization theory through their research showing that rates of delinquency decreased as distance from the inner city increased. Their research also illuminated certain shared characteristics of places with concentrated delinquency, such as physical decay, poor housing, broken homes, illegitimate births, and heterogeneous populations—a group of characteristics termed social disorganization.

Subsequent theorization has revised social disorganization, leading to the idea of a concentrated disadvantage whereby a combination of negative structural factors, such as percent below poverty line, percent unemployed and high residential turnover, lead to an overall negative outcome that can put individuals at a higher risk of crime. For example, Gramsick and Bursik (1993) and Sampson et al. (1997, 1999) further developed theories of systemic social disorganization, which emphasize communal ties and shared values as being an important factor in predicting stability within neighborhoods. Finally, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) show how mutual trust and community solidarity, or *collective efficacy*, is an important factor in determining neighborhood crime rates. Social disorganization theory has become so greatly imbedded in criminological explanations that even individual-level studies acknowledge the importance of living in socially disorganized areas. For example, in their research empirically investigating Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) concept of self-control theory, Grasmick and his colleagues (1993) emphasize the importance of social disorganization in creating more opportunities to engage in crime (rather than more motivation towards crime).

Strain Theory

Arguably one of the most influential theories in the development of the class/crime relationship is anomie or strain theory. Durkheim's (2003) theory of anomie describes a state of normlessness whereas people in a society face a lack of social structure and regulation. Durkheim saw this as a major contributor to the rate of deviant behaviors. Robert Merton used Durkheim's term, anomie, redefined it, and applied it to modern American culture. Merton (1938) argued that the over-emphasis on the social

goal of success weakens society's governing norms, leading to a form of modern anomie. Merton's (1938) strain theory argued that disadvantaged groups in America are held to high aspirations of success as measured by wealth, yet due to unequal access to success, everyone cannot access the means to achieve these goals. This disconnect produces strain that causes them to turn toward other, often illegal, means of achieving success. The theory hypothesizes that persons of a lower class status turn to crime because they lack the resources to easily pursue culturally defined legitimate mechanisms of success.

Although Merton's strain theory is a fundamental theoretical framework within criminology, in light of recent advancements in medical sociology and social psychology recent scholars have begun to question the assumptions underlying Merton's strain theory. However, rather than abandon the theory altogether, Robert Agnew (1992) builds off of Merton's work to present a revised general theory of strain. Agnew's general theory of strain revises Merton's by pointing to new sources of strain the older versions of strain theory left out, such as the discrepancies between expectations and achievements as well as fair outcomes and achievements.

Furthermore, Agnew posits the impact of the cumulative effects of strain in causing delinquency at the structural level. Agnew focuses on coping strategies for strain and emphasizes the importance of macro-level factors that increase the probability of delinquency as a response to strain. He offers several explanations as to how macro-level factors can affect delinquency. First, social environments can increase or decrease the amount of importance placed on certain goals and values. Second, social environments can influence an individual's sensitivity to certain types of strain by altering how they

perceive adverse interactions. Third, social environments can affect the ability of individuals to correctly interpret the severity of strain. Due to the public nature of what Agnew (1992:72) calls the "street-corner world," individuals are constantly reminded about their failings and achievements, making it hard to objectively minimize strain. Finally, many social environments make it hard to cope with strain in a non-delinquent way. Agnew (1992) contends that, for youth and the urban underclass in particular, navigating away from negative stimuli can be virtually impossible; therefore, they remain trapped in environments where adverse situations are frequently encountered. Agnew's revised general strain theory provides an updated and more comprehensive approach in applying strain theories to modern causes of delinquent behavior and how strain theories can be applied to explaining structural causes of delinquency.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As previously stated, crime was first associated with economic conditions in France in the 1800's. Research by Guerry and Quetelet (1834) attempted to demonstrate the relationship between crime and poverty and found that wealthy regions were associated with higher property crime, but lower violent crime. Quetelet and his colleagues (1834) also found this pattern and attributed it to resentment stemming from economic inequality. This idea, that not only are social class and crime/delinquency related, but also the relationship is in fact an inverse one, made up a large part of popular thinking in criminology and public policy in the 1800's and early 1900's. Since the 1950's, questions about this inverse relationship have been revisited.

Recent research on this idea of a class-crime connection has become commonplace in modern social thought. Over the past 40 years, an enormous volume of research has emerged contradicting the previously assumed inverse class-crime relationship. Tittle and Villemez (1977) set out to determine the source behind the assumption of the negative class-crime relationship and argue comprehensive evidence that this relationship does not exist. They point out that a lack of empirical evidence, coupled with methodological shortcomings in the research, fails to support the existence of a negative relationship between class and crime. The research by Tittle and Villemez

(1977) was only the start of a long, and still ongoing, debate surrounding the class-crime relationship.

In their study, Tittle and Villemez (1977) use data from self-report studies of three states (New Jersey, Oregon, and Iowa) to examine the class-crime relationship. They constructed a scale of six criminal acts and then measured the frequency of past violations and probability of future violations to compare variation in criminality across class measures. Their findings show no consistent relationship between class and crime and, in fact, contradict many of the extant theories surrounding class and crime. Tittle and Villemez (1977) present evidence showing that official police data are often too inconsistent to be accurate indicators of crime; however, subsequent research shows that the crimes of homicide, robbery, and motor-vehicle theft tend to be reliable measures of crime (Tittle and Villemez, 1977; Krivo and Peterson 1996, 2000).

To provide further support for their previous research, Tittle, Villemez, and Smith (1978) conducted a meta-analysis of the class-crime relationship. They compared every instance in the literature where a class-crime relationship had been reported and performed a multivariate analysis to explain the variation in the data. Their findings show that "the data as a whole only show a very slight negative relationship between social class and crime/delinquency" (Tittle, et al. 1978; 647). Their findings also address the observed historical decline in the power of the relationship between social class and crime. Tittle et al. (1978) present two reasons for the declining trend observed. First, they posit that a weakening in the connection between class and crime may be representative of instances where self-report data previously showed biases in the process that have now

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been corrected. A second possibility that they suggest explains the decreased connection between class and crime is that the official data showed a relationship in the past, but social class has become less important, thus reflecting the observed decline in the relationship between crime and social class. Either assumption proposed in their articles would still lead to the undermining of the relationship between class and crime. They conclude by proposing that research move away from class-based theories toward theories that emphasize more generic processes. The research by Tittle and his colleagues offers insight into the class-crime relationship, insight that posits that the two are not related as previously thought.

Structural Causes of Crime

The discussion above focused on individual-level data, but the findings encouraged questions about the supposed class-crime relationship at other levels of analysis. Namely, as the class-crime relationship became questionable at the individual level, scholars' interest in the relationship at more aggregated levels of analysis were ignited. As I indicated in the introduction, I am joining with this latter line of inquiry.

Early criminologists noticed a geographical trend in the occurrence of crime. They noticed that areas in the country with greater levels of economic inequality experience higher crime rates. Thus, large metropolitan areas, especially in the southeastern United States, have higher levels of criminal activity than do rural areas, or areas in the northern parts of the United States. In their famous study, Shaw and McKay (1942) showed that, among 21 different cities, delinquency rates persisted despite changing ethnic and socioeconomic changes during that time. Shaw and McKay

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demonstrated that factors outside of the individual, such as areal-level poverty, residential racial heterogeneity, and residential mobility were important in determining causes of higher crime areas and thus higher crime rates.

Blau and Blau (1982:114-115) posed an important question in their study of metropolitan structure and violent crime: "not what kind of individuals tend to commit violent crimes, but what social conditions make it likely that many people commit them." To test the processes behind the causes of crime, Blau and Blau (1982) gathered census data from 1970 consisting of samples from the 125 largest metropolitan areas (SMSAs) in the United States. They chose seven independent variables to study, which they thought would give the most accurate descriptions of the causes of crime: "SMSA population size, percentage of the population that was black, percent poor, geographical region, level of income inequality, percentage of the population that was divorced, and level of racial socioeconomic inequality" (Blau and Blau 1982:120).[2] Blau and Blau studied why certain areas had higher levels of crime than others. Early researchers had argued that higher levels of violence in the south resulted from a "southern subculture of violence" (Blau and Blau 1982:115). The southern subculture of violence hypothesis is based on the idea that violent crimes are intrinsic to southern subculture, permeating interpersonal relationships in the south.

Scholars such as Hackney (1969) attribute the southern culture of violence to ongoing racial tensions that began in the Civil War that have persisted up through the 20th century. Alternatively, Blau and Blau (1982) have posited that the higher rates of crime in

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[2] It is worth noting that although not explicitly identified as such, these variables are consistent with the theoretical traditions of social disorganization and strain theories.

the south may be an outcome of the racial composition in the south, pointing to the fact that Blacks have had proportionately higher rates of crime than Whites.[3] However, studies began to show that race could not account single handedly for disparities in crime rates.

Blau and Blau (1982) performed ordinary-least squares regression models (OLS) to test the effects of their independent variables. Their results show that socioeconomic inequality between races, as well as economic inequality as a whole, increases rates of violence. However, the results show that once economic inequalities are controlled, neither poverty nor southern location remain statistically significant predictors of violent crime. Their results also show that the "percentage black" of the population showed little significance as well. Blau and Blau's study contradicted a straightforward subculture of violence in the south in favor of a theory of violence resulting from pronounced socioeconomic inequalities. Their research was important because it complicated the relationship between race, poverty, and violence.

Others hypothesized the growing trend of attributing crime to structural causes. Taylor and Covington (1988) sought to investigate how ecological changes in neighborhoods affect violence and overall crime rates. Taylor and Covington were particularly concerned with testing two major hypothetical factors at the time: relative deprivation, which is the measurement of what an individual has compared with those immediately near him, and social disorganization, which is the term that describes the process a neighborhood goes through during times of rapid change…either growth or

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[3] Blau and Blau (1982) do acknowledge the racial discrimination and bias that exists in official records, yet they maintain that actual differences in criminal offenses exist.

decline. Using data from Baltimore neighborhoods in the 1970's, they found that both

relative deprivation and social disorganization predicted increasing levels of violent

crime. However, they also found important processes by which these two mechanisms

predicted violent crime. Relative deprivation processes appeared to explain increases in

crime rates, specifically murder rates, in emerging poor neighborhoods, while social

disorganization was more closely linked to explaining violence in neighborhoods that

were in the process of gentrifying (Taylor and Covington 1988). Research seems to

support a structural argument for increasing crime rates and also gives rise to the idea that

a neighborhood does not only have to be in economic decline to have high crime rates, as

suggested by others, but that a neighborhood experiencing economic growth also is

susceptible to increasing violent crime rates. These results also support those of Blau and

Blau (1982) who argued economic inequality was an important factor in predicting

violent crime rates. Since one could easily assume that both declining and increasing

economic opportunities within neighborhoods would be accompanied by some level of

increasing income inequality, Taylor and Covington's (1988) research built off of

previous research and provided more insight into the structural causes of crime.

 Despite apparent consistency in the research reviewed thus far, inconsistent

findings in the class-crime relationship were numerous. Land, McCall, and Cohen (1990)

attempted to address inconsistent findings in past research through their article about the

structural covariates of homicide rates. Land et al. used aggregate data from the 1960's,

1970's, and 1980's and investigated three different levels of analysis: city, metropolitan

area, and state. Their findings suggest that the large inconsistencies in the results of

previous studies were the result of high levels of collinearity among some of the variables in the regression models. Even more, they found three main significant factors in predicting homicide rates: the level of resource-deprivation faced by a community or neighborhood, the percentage of the population that was divorced, and the population-structure index (which is a measure of city size along with population density) (1990:951-952). These findings show support for previous research that views crime as a structural, not an individual, issue. They found that the areas with high absolute deprivation also had high relative deprivation so any attempts to address either one separately statistically cancel each other out (Land et al. 1990). Since then, researchers have tried to better specify models involving class and crime at aggregate levels; however, inconsistencies remain.

Further supporting the idea that crime is caused by structural factors, Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls (1999) use a spatial analysis to examine the varying mechanisms that produce collective efficacy for children. By looking at the spatial dynamics of neighborhood structural characteristics, Sampson and his colleagues are able to assess the structural factors that are correlated with negative outcomes for children. They found that the most important factors in establishing collective efficacy are concentrated affluence, low population density, and residential stability. This provides further support for the idea that the structural factors of a place are more important in predicting certain outcomes than the individuals who live there.

Recent scholars have continued to find support for the importance of structural factors in predicting crime. Tcherni (2011) revisits the importance of what she refers to as

"the big three" structural determinates of homicide (poverty, racial composition, and disruption of family structure) to examine whether or not these factors were equally important across large differences in time. By testing these variables at two different time periods, 1950-1960 and 1995-2005, she found that the importance of these structural factors has not changed significantly across the timespan, even though the political and economic landscape has changed drastically. The fact that these structural variables have remained consistent over this time period suggests that they have become entrenched in society and act as a systemic source of disadvantage.

Although research attempts to uncover the structural factors that cause crime have increased, several important areas of research have yet to be closely examined. First, much of the previous research focuses on cities as their unit of analysis. Though cities are important, I have chosen to examine neighborhoods because they often offer a more accurate reflection of the social environments and structural mechanisms that impact an area as well as the people living there. Second, many studies use data that are now outdated. Social environments are constantly changing so by using more recent data, my findings will be more reflective of current trends. Finally, much of the previous research focuses solely on homicides. By focusing on other types of crime in addition to homicide, I hope to illustrate the nuanced relationship between certain types of crime and various structural factors.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND METHODS

The data I use come from The National Neighborhood Crime Study (NNCS),

developed by Ruth D. Peterson and Lauren J. Krivo from Ohio State University. The

NNCS assembles tract-level crime and socioeconomic data for cities in the U.S, allowing

for ecological-level analyses of crime. The NNCS is a compilation of crime and socio-

demographic data for 9,593 census tracts in 91 cities in 64 metro areas. Starting with a

regionally stratified random sample of cities with over 100,000 people, researchers

requested crime data directly from local police. When data were not available, the city

was replaced with an alternate, but structurally similar place. Within these cities, census

tracts were selected. The data exclude tracts with under 300 people and those with more

than 50% of its population in institutionalized populations. In short, the study includes

tract and city-level data, which many researchers have shown to be an appropriate

measurement of neighborhoods (Bursick and Grasmick 1993; Krivo and Peterson 1996,

2000; Sampson et. al. 1999). To be clear, I use neighborhoods as the unit of analysis in

the present research.

Dependent Variables

I examine 3 different dependent variables: homicide (T_MURDER), robbery

(T_ROBB), and motor vehicle theft (T_MVTHFT). I select these variables because they

are the three most consistently reported crimes in official data and thus the most reliable

official measures of crime (Tittle and Villemez, 1977; Krivo and Peterson 1996, 2000).

These variables separately represent the sum number of murders and non-negligent

manslaughters, robberies, and motor vehicles thefts reported to local police. In order to

minimize any stark annual variations in these crimes, the data were collected for the years

1999-2001 and averaged. All three variables are continuous-level measurements. There

are 9012 valid cases for the variables murder/non-negligent homicide, robbery, and

motor-vehicle theft.

Independent Variables

The main independent variable that I use measures neighborhood-level

socioeconomic resources. This variable, identified as concentrated disadvantage index

(T_CONDIS), compiles 4 separate measures commonly used to measure aggregate levels

of socio-economic status (see Chapter 2 for a review of the literature). The 4 measures

include tract-level standardized scores for percent secondary sector low wage jobs

(T_SSLOW), jobless rate for the working age population (T_JBLSWA), percent female

headed households (T_FEMHED), and poverty rate (T_POVRTY).[4] I use this index

measure because it represents a comprehensive measurement of neighborhood

disadvantage.

I have also selected five control variables. I use percent males aged 15-24

(T_ML1524), which is a percentage measure of the males aged 15-24 who live in the

neighborhood, residential stability (T_RESIN2), which provides a standardized score that

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[4] Standardized scores are used in order to make scores from different distributions (i.e., different variable measurements) more comparable.

includes percent renters and percent who have recently moved, racial heterogeneity (T_RACHET), which measures the proportion of the population comprised of racial-ethnic minorities, including African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Asians, Pacific Islanders, multiracial.

I also use a regional variable, which measures the region in which the selected neighborhood is situated. I create 2 measures for region because of long-known regional differences in areal-level crime, one which specifies whether or not the neighborhood is in the south (REGION1), and one indicating if the neighborhood location was in the west (REGION2). I did this given research showing that western states sometimes showed a higher level of crime than the south; however, using these different regional variables did not change my results, so I only report the models using the south variable in the following chapter.

Aside from my regional variable, all variables are continuous-level measurements.

Analytic Strategy

To better examine the structural factors that predict violent crime at the neighborhood level, I run a series of ordinary least square (OLS) regression models. Regression analyses are used to model or predict the relationship of a certain dependent variable to any number of independent or control variables. To gain a detailed look into how structural factors separately influence selected violent and property crime, I input my independent variables one at a time until the model includes all of my chosen variables.

The first model I examine includes "murder" as the dependent variable. The second model includes "robbery" as the dependent variable. Finally, in model 3, I examine "motor vehicle theft" as the dependent variable. For the sake of parsimonious presentation of the results, I present only the full model for each of these dependent variables in the following chapter (i.e., the model that includes all of the independent variables described above).

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that the average number of murders was 1.52, the average robbery number was about 45.1, and the average number of motor-vehicle thefts was 112.53. The mean for concentrated disadvantage was 0.00. It is important to note, however, that the range of this variable is quite large, indicating diversity in the socio-economic standing of neighborhoods included in the analysis.

The descriptives also indicate a fair amount of neighborhood racial diversity, with the average racial heterogeneity measure of 0.38. In other words, the average neighborhood in this sample has a racial minority population of 38 percent. The average percent of young males aged 15 to 24 was 7.29 percent of the total tract population. The average level of residential stability was 17.18. The descriptive statistics also indicate an average of .32 for the south variable, which means that 32 percent of the neighborhoods in this sample are located in the southern region of the United States.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	Valid Cases *(n)*
Murder/non-negligent homicide	0 – 33	1.52	2.52	9012
Robberies	0 – 997	45.09	49.7	9593
Motor vehicle theft	0 – 1545	112.53	104.1	9512
Concentrated Disadvantage	-1.6 - 4.36	0.00	0.88	9593
Racial Heterogeneity	0 – 0.80	0.38	0.20	9593
Percent Males aged 15-24	0 - 44.19	7.29	3.48	9593
Residential stability	0 - 96.1	17.18	11.83	9593
South	0-1	0.32	0.47	9593

Table 2 below shows the results of the three models of neighborhood crime. As shown, each regression model includes the structural covariates that were used to predict murder, robbery, and motor vehicle theft. As stated earlier, I present the results including only the South regional variable because the south has been traditionally associated with higher rates of crime.

Table 2. Regression Results Showing Parameter Estimates (Standard Error in Parenthesis*)*

	Model 1 Murder	Model 2 Robbery	Model 3 Motor Vehicle Theft
Concentrated Disadvantage	1.38 (0.03)*	25.30 (0.53)*	29.13 (1.21)*
Racial Heterogeneity	-0.55 (0.13)*	17.83 (2.43)*	76.66 (5.50)*
Residential Stability	-0.01 (0.03)	7.30 (0.60)*	12.59 (1.33)*
Males 15-24	-0.02 (0.01)*	-0.65 (0.14)	0.06 (0.32)
South Region	0.18 (0.05)*	1.67 (1.00)	-1.17 (2.17)
Intercept	1.85 (0.08)	42.48 (1.44)	82.89 (3.26)*
R^2	0.23	0.23	0.11
F Statistic	551.02*	577.66*	230.12*

*=p<.05

As shown in the first model in Table 1 above, the data are a good overall fit for explaining murder (F=551.02, p<0.05). Approximately 23% of the variation in murder is explained by the five variables in the analysis. The data indicate that concentrated disadvantage is a statistically significant predictor of murder. Further, for each unit increase in concentrated disadvantage, we can expect a 1.38 increase in murder (b=1.38, p<0.05). Model 1 further shows that racial heterogeneity also is statistically significant in predicting murder, and that for every unit increase in racial heterogeneity, there is a 0.55 decrease in murder (b=-0.55, p<0.05). Residential stability is not statistically significant (but the data indicate a negative coefficient for this variable). The number of males aged 15-24 is a significant predictor of murder as well, but it is not in the direction that is theoretically predicted given crime-prone gender and age correlates. Specifically, I find that with each unit increase in the proportion of young males, I can expect a 0.02 decrease in murder (b=-0.01, p<0.05). Finally, neighborhoods located in the south

experience more murders than neighborhoods located out of the south, and this relationship is statistically significant (b=0.18, p<0.05).

Model 2 also shows that the data are appropriate for explaining robbery (F=577.66, p<0.05), explaining 23% of the variation in robbery. Just like in Model 1, concentrated disadvantage is a statistically significant predictor of robbery, increasing by 25.30 with every unit increase in robbery (b=0.53, p<0.05). Although concentrated disadvantage remains significant in predicting robbery, the control variables show differing effects as compared to Model 1, which predicted murder. For example, as shown in Model 2 both racial heterogeneity and residential stability are statistically significant in predicting robberies, increasing 17.83 and 7.30 units, respectively. (Recall that racial heterogeneity was negatively related to murder and residential stability was not a statistically significant predictor of murder). The proportion of the male population aged 15-24 is negatively associated with each increase in robbery (as it was with murder), but this relationship is not significant. Finally, although neighborhoods in the south were again associated with an increase in robberies, this relationship is not statistically significant.

The last model, Model 3, also shows that the data are a good fit for explaining motor vehicle theft (F=230.12, p<0.05). The variables in the third model explain roughly 11% of the variation in motor vehicle theft, so the variables included in this analysis do not seem to explain motor vehicle theft as well as they do murder and robbery. This may be because the variables I selected for the present study are not as good at explaining property crime as they are at explaining violent crime, but I will discuss this possibility

more in the concluding chapter. Nonetheless, as revealed in Model 3, the data indicate

that once again, concentrated disadvantage is a statistically significant predictor of motor

vehicle theft, showing 29.13 more motor vehicle thefts per unit increase in concentrated

disadvantage (b=29.13, p<0.05). I also find that racial heterogeneity remains a

statistically significant factor in predicting motor vehicle theft. The relationship is

positive, so for each unit increase in racial heterogeneity, I can expect about 76 more

motor vehicle thefts (b=76.66, p<0.05). Similar to the robbery model (Model 2),

residential stability is a statistically significant predictor of motor vehicle theft (b=12.59,

p<0.05). The variable representing young males shows a positive but not statistically

significant relationship with motor vehicle theft. As a reminder, this relationship is

different than for either of the other two crime models. Also, unique as compared to the

other models, the data reveal that neighborhoods located in the South have fewer motor

vehicle thefts than neighborhoods outside of the South; however, like the robbery model,

this relationship is not statistically significant.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the past several decades, criminology research focusing on structural causes, rather than individual causes, has regained prominence. After reviewing the previous research in which attempts are made to isolate the structural causes of crime, I found that several areas of study were lacking in both scope and depth of analyses. Specifically, I noticed a deficit in research using neighborhoods as a unit of analysis. In addition, I noticed a need to examine different types of crime within an ecological framework. Given these issues, I conducted an analysis of structural causes of crime using neighborhood data and investigating various crime types. In other words, I set out to determine the structural causes of violent and non-violent crime at the neighborhood level to add to the already broad body of work analyzing crime at the aggregate level. Through a series of OLS regressions models, I was able to highlight some key findings regarding the socioeconomic factors that explain crime in large-urban areas.

First, net of all other effects, concentrated disadvantage was shown to have a strong positive correlation with all three of my crime variables (murder, robbery, and motor vehicle theft). Since we know that concentrated disadvantage represents a combination of several structural variables (see chapter 5 above), it can confidently be said that this finding supports a structural explanation of crime. This finding also supports the idea that place influences crime such that crime increases in socio-economically

disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, this finding supports previous notions suggesting that the cumulative effects of socioeconomic deprivation and the frequently poor social structure of certain areas can help explain higher than average rates of certain types of crime (Shaw and McKay 1942; Gramsick et. al. 1993; Taylor and Covington 1988). In my study, concentrated disadvantage was shown to be the single most consistent predictor of crime.

Second, the findings suggest that homicides are more frequent in more racially homogenous areas, yet as racial heterogeneity increases, so does the number of robberies and motor vehicle thefts. One reason for this inconsistency may be that while murders are typically committed intra-racially, with interracial murders less common, crimes such as robberies and motor vehicle theft may be more opportunistic. Populated urban areas may provide more opportunities for crime, as neighborhoods of differing socioeconomic statuses come into contact with each other, a finding that is supported by previous research (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Peterson and Krivo, 2009).

Third, although residential stability was not statistically significant in predicting murder, it was statistically significant in regards to robbery and motor vehicle theft. The results indicate that as residential stability increases so do the number of robberies and motor vehicle thefts. This finding could be explained by thinking about how residential stability may relate to day-to-day consistency in lived experiences. When people stay in neighborhoods over a period of time, they can begin to predict the comings and goings of others, which can provide better opportunities for crimes such as robbery and motor

vehicle theft. However, this relationship needs to be further examined before this hypothesis can be accepted.

Fourth, the results show that the number of murders increased as the number of young males decreased. Further, number of males 15-24 was not statistically significant in predicting either robbery or motor vehicle theft. One explanation behind the inverse relationship between murder and males aged 15-24 could be found by examining the effects of mass incarceration. As poor, urban communities have become increasingly targeted by law enforcement, the number of young males has decreased, presumably because many of them have entered into the prison system. The effects of mass incarceration on neighborhood violence should be examined further in order to better understand the relationship between young men, incarceration, and violent crime.

Finally, neighborhoods located in the South were a significant predictor of crime for only one variable, murder. This finding is important because it calls into question the "southern subculture of violence" thesis that found favor with scholars such as Hackney (1969) that attributes higher levels of violent crime in the South to latent racial tensions. Although homicide was positively related with southern neighborhoods, robbery was found not to be statistically significantly when explained by southern location (although it operated in the positive direction). This inconsistent influence suggests that further research needs to be done examining the southern subculture of violence.

It is worth noting that while my unit of study for this research is unique as compared with previous aggregated research using national samples, the present findings reproduce some key findings from past research that used larger sample areas such as

cities and states. This is extremely important moving forward because it supports the argument that neighborhoods may produce the same or similar criminogenic effects that cities do.

Moving forward, more detailed neighborhood studies can be used to target high-crime areas. My study analyzes a nationally representative sample of neighborhoods in large, urban cities, but does not necessarily target specific ones. Future research should now focus on comparing specific neighborhoods in order to understand why some may have a higher crime rate than others, even when they appear similar in terms of socioeconomic composition. Also, even though the data this research uses is fairly recent, the economic and sociopolitical landscape is constantly changing. Macroeconomic factors such as market globalization and technological advancements that influence socioeconomic status coupled with the effects of political decisions and policy implementations constantly shape neighborhood population dynamics and create structural changes; therefore, future studies should strive to use the most recent data possible. Doing so will ensure that future results are always informed and reflect the most current socioeconomic and political landscape.

Finally, although aggregate studies can provide a wealth of knowledge about different areas, qualitative studies should not be underestimated or underemphasized. Ethnographies and other field studies provide an in-depth look into neighborhoods that are hard to replicate with quantitative analyses. By increasing the amount of up-close and personal data available, we can enhance our ability to corroborate across studies,

allowing for a more rich and comprehensive understanding of the structural process

behind crime and other social phenomena.

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