5

Community as a Criminal Culture

A key insight of the Chicago School was that social disorganization in the zone in transition was fertile ground for the emergence and then transmission of criminal "traditions." Indeed, the very idea of culture conflict—and then at the individual level differential association—was predicated on the view that inner-city areas are marked by an ongoing battle between a strong criminal culture and weak conventional culture. Since that time, the image of the "community as a criminal culture" has occupied a central place in the study of why neighborhoods in the urban core experience high rates of crime, especially of violent crime. Importantly, however, scholars in different generations have offered distinct theories of the sources and nature of the cultures that prevail in these communities. As will be seen, one set of theories, which emphasized delinquent and violent subcultures, emerged as urban America made the transition from the time of Shaw and McKay into the 1960s. A second set of theories, reflecting more contemporary developments such as the concentration of the "truly disadvantaged" in the central city, emerged in the latter part of the 1900s and has proceeded into the current century. This recent scholarship has been informed by a more sophisticated understanding of culture that has led to new controversies.

The image of "community as a criminal culture" first seemed to reach its apex in the 1960s—a decade marked by rising rates of crime and racial divisiveness. In this context, crime was far too readily racialized and treated as an urban, Black problem. The urban, Black experience in the 1960s was scrutinized

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for low rates of marriage and employment and high rates of out-of-wedlock births and welfare dependency. The stigma associated with the urban, Black experience in the 1960s was perhaps most (in)famously reinforced by the U.S. Department of Labor's Moynihan Report, presented in 1965, describing urban Black ghetto families as creating a "tangle of pathology." Though Moynihan may have been trying to emphasize the durability of the inequality facing poor, urban Blacks (Sampson, 2009), his words were often treated as conveying a self-perpetuating culture of inner-city, Black poverty.

That latter interpretation of the Moynihan Report ignited intense criticism on the grounds of insensitivity and victim blaming. As Robert Sampson (2009, p. 261) suggests in his review of the impact of Moynihan, "To this day, the term *pathology* is avoided like the plague among social scientists." And, Patricia Cohen (2010) of the *New York Times* adds, "The word 'culture' became a live grenade, and the idea that attitudes and behavior patterns kept people poor was shunned." Yet after decades of largely being relegated to the academic sidelines, the idea of urban community culture playing a role in poverty and crime is being reconsidered by a number of scholars (see, e.g., Cohen, 2010; Small, Harding, and Lamont, 2010).

This chapter discusses this historical ebb and flow of culture's perceived role in community crime. As noted, a key issue in this particular chapter is how scholars have tended to theorize about culture's role in crime-related problems in communities at various points in history. In brief, how, exactly, is community culture related to crime? As will be discussed, there seem to be two general approaches to this question. One view holds that culture in inner cities is *crime generating*. The other holds that culture in inner cities is *crime permitting*. These two views define a fundamental difference between *criminal (sub)cultural theories*, rooted in a "culture as values" perspective, and *attenuated culture theories*, viewing culture as a more of a "behavioral tool kit" to be enacted situationally.

Related to the distinction between the crime-generating versus crime-permitting role of culture in high-crime communities is an implicit difference of opinion about value conflict versus value consensus. Those who view culture as crime generating see high-crime communities as marked by conflict regarding the morality of crime, with conventional culture standing side by side with (and battling) *criminal subcultures*. In contrast, those viewing culture as crime permitting tend to view high-crime neighborhoods as having a largely unified set of values regarding the wrongfulness of crime, though the conventional culture is in a severely weakened, or attenuated, state.

This chapter attempts to detail these different views regarding the theoretical relevance of culture in community criminology. We begin by discussing crime-generating criminal subcultural theories that dominated discussions of the role of culture in the early and mid-twentieth century. By

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the 1970s, however, the subcultural theories were largely either heavily criticized or dismissed altogether. The emergence of the systemic model of social disorganization theory in the 1970s and 1980s brought about the favoring of crime-permitting attenuated culture theories instead. Although theories advocating criminal subcultures were still present in criminology, they tended not to emphasize *community-level* cultural processes, and instead focused on regional cultures (i.e., the southern subculture of violence), individual-level delinquent/criminal attitudes, or gang cultures (separate from their community context).

Notably, the discussion of community culture and crime took on a different flavor beginning around 1990. While still wrestling with the debate between crime-generating criminal subcultures and crime-permitting attenuated culture, greater attention is given in this later era to a unique brand of community—the "truly disadvantaged" community. As detailed in Chapter 4, deindustrialization had changed the face of inner-city communities, largely between 1970 and 1980 such that they were increasingly poor, increasingly composed of female-headed households, and increasingly Black. Scholars took note of the extreme structural disadvantage characterizing such communities, but they also observed culture in the form of "ghetto-related practices" in areas of concentrated disadvantage. The belief prevailed that deindustrialization of the inner-city—and the extreme poverty and social isolation that followed in its wake—gave rise to a "way of life" that included persistent male joblessness, teen childbearing, involvement in the drug industry, and public displays of toughness, emphasizing the use of physical violence to defend an individual's honor. Such behaviors are typically not tolerated in "mainstream" American culture, but scholars documented that these practices were accepted or even encouraged in particularly dire contexts, where mainstream habits seemed situationally irrelevant. The major sections to follow detail more fully the thinking about the role of culture in community crime across these distinct eras.

The Early and Mid-Twentieth-Century Subcultural Tradition

As developed by the Chicago School, the foundational work on communities and crime discussed the important roles of both structural disadvantage and the inter-generational transmission of cultural values. In particular, Shaw and McKay (1969, p. 170) argued that disorganized, high-crime communities not only had structural deficits in that they lacked legitimate opportunities and strong institutional and informal controls but also had "systems of competing and conflicting moral values." They contended that while growing

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up in these high-crime neighborhoods, youngsters were exposed to attitudes that approved of delinquency and that these criminogenic attitudes were then passed onto successive generations of youths through social learning. For reasons alluded to in earlier chapters, Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory had largely fallen out of favor in criminology by the middle of the twentieth century. Two of the most prominent theoretical perspectives of that time were, instead, Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory and Robert Merton's anomie-strain theory. Discussions of the community origins of crime in the 1950s and 1960s thus were framed using one or both of these two traditions.

Sutherland posited that crime, just like noncriminal behavior, was learned in interaction with significant others. According to his differential association theory, techniques regarding how to commit crime are learned, but importantly, so too are motives, drives, rationalizations, and definitions of the behavior. Based on the assumption of culture conflict, or the idea that there were variable or differential "norms of conduct" in society, those who engage in crime learn to define law-violating behavior, overall, as "favorable" as opposed to "unfavorable." Most individuals are exposed to variable definitions of criminal behavior—some favorable and others unfavorable—from the range of significant others, or differential associations, in their lives. However, not all associations are of equal importance in terms of imparting their definitions of criminal behavior. Individuals are more likely to internalize the definitions of behavior learned from associations that are of long duration and high frequency, priority, and intensity. Ultimately, when an individual learns and internalizes normative definitions favorable to law violation in excess of normative definitions unfavorable to law violation, crime is a likely result.

In contrast to Sutherland's social-psychological theory, Merton's perspective was macro-structural in origin. In brief, Merton suggested that crime resulted from society's emphasis on economic success "by any means necessary." Merton claimed that the goal of monetary wealth is *the* pervasive cultural goal in the United States. Indeed, the American dream of being upwardly mobile and attaining material success was a universal prescription—something so highly extolled that everyone was mandated to value and achieve it. In this context, Merton argued, there is less cultural emphasis on norms regarding the acceptable means by which one should achieve the economic success goal (i.e., through formal education and legitimate occupations). Thus, there is a cultural imbalance in that the goal of economic success—the American dream—is emphasized over and above the means by which success is achieved. Merton stated that *anomie*—weakened or absent regulatory norms—results from this imbalance in emphasis (goals over means) in that norms lose their power to control behavior.

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Beyond cultural imbalance, Merton also implicated the social structure. He claimed that social stratification in the United States results in unequal access to the legitimate means for achieving monetary success. Put more simply, there is tremendous inequality in terms of access to, for example, good schools and good jobs. For poorer segments of society, access to these legitimate, or institutionalized, means of achieving the universally prescribed cultural goal of success is blocked. Such structural obstacles, in combination with the cultural exaggeration of the goal of monetary success—at the expense of cultural norms—create a context ripe for the reliance on illegitimate means to achieve success. This context is thus likely to have a relatively high rate of crime. However, beyond this macro-level effect, Merton recognized that *individuals* experience problems of adjustment associated with living in a social context characterized by cultural imbalance and structural inequality. This sort of social context exerts strain on individuals who experience a disjuncture between culturally prescribed goals and the availability of legitimate means. Individuals can adapt to that strain in various ways; for some the response involves crime or deviance.

Criminological work in the mid-twentieth century that was interested in understanding the ecological patterning of crime, noting that crime was much higher in certain communities than others, tended to base its explanations on the ideas of Sutherland and/or Merton. Indeed, some of the more prominent scholars during this era, to be discussed below, were students of either Sutherland or Merton—or both. In the tradition of Sutherland, high-crime communities were presumed to have subcultures that championed attitudes favorable to the commission of crime. In short, crime was presumed to be normative behavior in such communities, and pro-criminal values were successfully transmitted from one generation to the next through the process of socialization. In the tradition of Merton, high-crime communities were presumed to have little access to legitimate means for achieving success (i.e., good schools, plentiful jobs), and thus they contained high concentrations of individuals experiencing strain. Some scholars integrated the two traditions by suggesting that collective strain led to a community-level response in the form of a delinquent subculture. In the sections that immediately follow, several of the more prominent theories of community crime from this era are discussed in more detail, including the work of Albert Cohen, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, Walter Miller, and Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti.

Cohen's Delinquent Boys: Rejecting Middle-Class Values

Albert Cohen's work on working-class delinquent boys is the first of those prominent theories. Cohen received his undergraduate training and a

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Ph.D. in sociology at Harvard, where Merton was on faculty until 1938, and where Merton's mentor, Talcott Parsons, was a mainstay. In the interim between his undergraduate and doctoral studies, Cohen obtained a master's degree in sociology at Indiana University, with Sutherland as his adviser. Given this background, Cohen's blending of the traditions of Merton, Parsons, and Sutherland is clearly no accident. In brief, the theory he outlined in his famous 1955 book, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*, suggested that there were collective responses to problems of adjustment in the form of subcultures, or gangs. In particular, Cohen posited that collective adaptations to strain in the form of male gangs were likely to emerge in working-class communities, where a high concentration of boys experienced the frustration of not being able to measure up to mainstream, middle-class standards. The middle-class goals that Cohen discussed were broader than the economic success goal that Merton emphasized, but they were very much in the spirit of Merton's notion of strain nonetheless.

More reflective of Parsons's influence, however, Cohen detailed how working-class boys were frustrated in the school context, in particular, as a result of not being able to readily measure up to the values emphasized and rewarded in school settings, including independence, self-control, asceticism, and rationality. Consequently, gangs provided these boys with a context in which a new set of goals and norms could be established that expressly rejected middle-class values, virtually turning middle-class culture upside down. The gangs' inverted value systems furnished alternative ways through which working-class boys could achieve status. For example, gang members could achieve success by exhibiting aggression, impulsiveness, and disrespect for property. Cohen viewed the behavior that the gangs promoted as nonutilitarian and malicious.

Thus, gangs, and the crimes in which they participated, originated or emerged because of the structural obstacles to economic success facing boys in working-class communities and the collective problems of adjustment that resulted. Importantly, however, the gangs and their criminal conduct were perpetuated through cultural transmission of delinquent values. It was this cultural transmission that was the most proximal cause of crime, as the gang subculture provided definitions of behavior that favored violation of the law. Nonetheless, with Cohen's theory suggesting that such "oppositional values" were adaptations to structural inequality, the implication is that the norms and values promoted by the gangs did *not* represent autonomous subcultures (autonomous from structure) with ongoing integrity. If structural stressors were removed, Cohen's gangs would presumably wither.

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Cloward and Ohlin: Types of Delinquent Subcultures

With their 1960 publication of *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*, Cloward and Ohlin provided another theory that emphasized the emergence of unique subcultures within poorer communities. In their work, Cloward and Ohlin made an important advance over Merton's discussion of adaptations to strain. In doing so, they integrated Merton's ideas with those of Chicago-School theorists such as Sutherland, Shaw and McKay, and Solomon Kobrin (for a review, see Cullen, 1984, 1988, 2010).

Similar to Merton, who was Cloward's professor during his doctoral studies at Columbia, Cloward and Ohlin viewed delinquency as an outgrowth of social inequality, with legitimate avenues to economic success blocked for many. Thus, problems of adjustment created strain that needed to be adapted to, perhaps through criminal behavior. However, while Merton had noted that various forms of criminal or deviant adaptation were possible, he did not provide much detail as to why one form of adaptation would be chosen over another, implicitly suggesting that opportunities for illegitimate adaptive responses were equally available to all. Cloward and Ohlin specified more clearly why particular adaptations to structurally induced strain might vary, and in doing so, they challenged Merton's assumption of equality in illegitimate means. Borrowing from Cloward's earlier work (Cloward, 1959), Cloward and Ohlin claimed that, just as legitimate means were variably available, *illegitimate* means were also available to some but blocked for others. Slum communities, they noted, were differentially organized, and the level of organization shaped the availability of illegitimate opportunities and thus the nature of collective responses to strain across communities. In sum, Cloward and Ohlin claimed that adaptive responses to strain varied across communities, depending on the illegitimate opportunities available.

Similar to Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin saw the collective response to strain as gang formation. The alienation experienced by large numbers of lower-class, urban dwellers (males, in particular) living in close proximity to one another facilitated gang formation, with the gangs providing reassurance and group legitimacy to individual feelings of frustration and injustice (Cullen, 2010). However, unlike Cohen's *Delinquent Boys*, Cloward and Ohlin emphasized that values and behaviors of gangs varied. Some gangs focused on instrumental criminal enterprises, some emphasized violence, and others centered on drug use—and these different forms of gangs were referred to as "criminal," "conflict," and "retreatist" gangs, respectively. Neighborhood organization, and the resulting availability of criminal opportunities,

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was the major determinant for the type of gang that would emerge in any given community. The most cohesive or socially integrated slum neighborhoods tended to breed criminal gangs, as they required an organized network structure that fostered the learning of criminal trades and offered connections to opportunities for enacting such skills (e.g., access to co-offenders, access to illicit markets). As Francis Cullen suggests in his 2010 review of Cloward and Ohlin's theory, "Not everyone with a problem of adjustment can adapt by becoming a white-collar criminal or becoming a drug dealer. These options are not equally available" (p. 173).

Alternatively, conflict gangs were often observed in disorganized neighborhoods that lacked integrated social networks. The youths in such neighborhoods thus lacked a readily accessible ongoing criminal network within which they could address their problems of adjustment. To compensate, the conflict gangs that emerged in such communities focused on resolving the problem of adjustment by linking status and violence. Since means of achieving status through monetary success were not available, displays of violence were touted as status enhancing instead.

According to Cloward and Ohlin, retreatist gangs emerged in both organized and disorganized communities. In both types of areas, there were some youths unsuccessful at exercising crime or violence, thus eliminating the option of gaining status from such behaviors. For such youths, criminal or violent gangs were not viable adaptations to strain. Cloward and Ohlin offered that a retreatist subculture emphasizing drug use emerged as a collective response to the strain faced by youths who were unsuccessful at crime or violence.

Overall, all three types of gangs described by Cloward and Ohlin involved the transmission of subcultural values that promoted criminal behavior as the most proximal cause of crime. Similar to Cohen, however, Cloward and Ohlin's ties to strain theory meant that the subcultures were not viewed as purely autonomous sets of values. Instead, there was assumed consensus regarding "conventional values," and the values touted by the gangs were more situational in nature—tied to structural community conditions in terms of blocked access to legitimate and illegitimate avenues for the achievement of economic success. In particular, criminal gangs offered illegitimate means of success and thus "criminal opportunity." For Cloward and Ohlin, "opportunity" was not an aspect of the environment external to already-motivated offenders (a perspective to be discussed in Chapter 7) but was instead a process whereby motivated offenders were created. In this process, strained individuals were integrated into a network of older offenders, acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary for criminal roles, and then gaining access to situations where those criminal roles could be performed (Cullen, 1984, 1988, 2010).

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Miller's Lower-Class Focal Concerns

In contrast to Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin's adaptive (and thus situational and nonautonomous) view of gang delinquency, Walter Miller is known for his "purer" cultural theory. In the 1958 article "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," Miller suggested that there was a distinctive, long-standing "tradition" within the urban lower class. This tradition consisted of values that encouraged criminal behavior. Specifically, Miller delineated six "focal concerns" that characterized lower-class culture and promoted crime: trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy. In its focus on getting into trouble and seeking excitement, lower-class culture conferred status on those who engaged in all sorts of crime and deviance, including fighting, stealing, drinking, drug use, or sexual promiscuity. Through a focal concern on toughness, lower-class culture especially promoted physical prowess. The emphasis on smartness in lower-class culture encouraged actions that indicate an ability to outsmart or con others. The valuing of fate discouraged earning money through legitimate hard work and instead encouraged income-generating strategies based on "luck," such as gambling. Finally, the valuing of autonomy fostered defiance of authority. From Miller's perspective, crime committed by those in the lower classes was a natural outcome of socialization within lower-class culture.

The Subculture of Violence

Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti's 1967 publication, *The Subculture of Violence*, was similar to Miller's work in that it attempted to explain high rates of crime in urban, lower-class environments as a function of subcultural concerns. However, it differed in that it focused on the subcultural sources of *violent* crime, in particular, including *expressive homicide* most notably (i.e., "heat of passion" homicide). In the tradition of Sutherland, Wolfgang and Ferracuti theorized that, within a subculture of violence in poor urban areas, group members were taught (by other members) that violent responses to slights and conflicts were excused, condoned, and even expected. In fact, the failure to exercise violence in certain situations would be greeted with scorn, with those using nonviolent solutions at risk of being ostracized from the group. Exposure to such pro-violent definitions and reinforcements commonly led to the internalization of these pro-violent values, with high levels of violence thus being continually perpetuated within the group. Still, not all individuals exposed to these pro-violent definitions actually engaged in violence as solutions to their conflicts. Wolfgang and Ferracuti proposed that variation in personality within poor urban subcultures differentiated members more prone to violence versus those less committed to the value system.

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While Wolfgang and Ferracuti's subculture of violence was originally posited in an attempt to understand higher rates of crime in poor, urban areas, it was embraced by other scholars as a way to account for higher rates of violence, especially homicide, in a variety of other geographic and social contexts. For example, the possibility of a southern subculture of violence was offered in an attempt to understand the disproportionately high rates of homicide and assault within the southern portion of the United States (see, e.g., Gastil, 1971; Hackney, 1969). From this perspective, southerners were thought to be socialized in a manner that violence in the face of conflict is tolerated or even expected (i.e., in the manner of a frontier mentality rooted in a history or duels and feuds). Other scholars used the idea of a subculture of violence to explain differential rates of crime across racial groups within the United States. In particular, a race-based subculture of violence was used to explain higher rates of violence among African Americans (e.g., Curtis, 1975).

The Declining Significance of Criminal Subcultures and the Rise of Attenuated Culture

The perspectives described above are good examples of popular theorizing about the nonrandom distribution of crime across communities during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. These perspectives drew on prominent scholarly theories of the time, and they were received and interpreted within the context of the prevailing social and political attitudes. Initially, these various explanations were palatable to many precisely because of the implication that criminals were "countercultural"—though, as noted above, several of these perspectives actually assumed value consensus, with oppositional subcultures arising only in the face of structural constraints (i.e., Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin). Even if social inequality played an indirect role, these theories proposed that crime ultimately existed because of unconventional (subcultural) values. Given such perspectives, who or what was to blame for crime? It was easy to use these theories to suggest that the problem of crime must be the fault of the families or social groups responsible for transmitting these values. In other words, subcultural theories were often associated with a mind-set that the groups afflicted with high rates of crime had only themselves to blame. Hence, these theories appeared quite useful in a 1950s and early 1960s America, when unquestioning loyalty to "the system," maintenance of the status quo, and fear of diversity were emphatic parts of the social climate.

The value-laden implications of subcultural theories, however, grew less popular into the 1960s, when conservative approaches to crime were challenged by those emphasizing structural inequality, class conflict, and racial

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threat. These latter perspectives saw the working and lower classes and racial/ethnic minorities not as holding values in opposition to those of the middle class, but as victims of a heavily stratified economic system and outright oppression at the hands of the middle and upper classes. As such, subcultural approaches began to be viewed as "blaming the victim," and their prominence in criminological theory diminished substantially.

Further lending to their decline in popularity, the subcultural theories of the mid-twentieth century had a tendency to move away from *community* dynamics and morph into *class*- and *race*-based cultural theories. The metamorphosis appeared based on the assumption that people shared subcultural values simply because of their particular race, social class, or region of residence, *regardless of whether they even knew one another* (Kornhauser, 1978). This trend diverted the field away from a focus on *cross-community* variation in crime and more in the direction of understanding cross-class, cross-race, and cross-regional differences. Recognizing how cultural explanations to such differences could reinforce social divisiveness and stereotypes, these theories were increasingly set aside as dangerously conservative.

In the more "liberal" national context beginning in the mid to late 1960s, the perspectives discussed above that had blended elements of strain and subcultural variation (i.e., Cloward and Ohlin [1960]; Cohen [1955]) began to be interpreted in a manner that stripped the theories of their community-based subcultural components. As an example, Francis Cullen—a student of Cloward's—described how this sociopolitical climate was in part responsible for the common mis-classification of Cloward and Ohlin's work as a strain theory:

> Scholars focused most completely on those aspects of *Delinquency and Opportunity* that paralleled Merton's concerns and meshed in turn with the social context . . . The prevailing ideological concern in the 1960s was with denial of legitimate, not illegitimate, opportunity. In this context, the concept of "illegitimate means" might have struck some scholars as an interesting twist, but wasn't it peripheral to solving the problems of delinquency . . . the key policy issue [of the time] was to attack this root cause by providing disadvantaged youth with equal opportunities: better schooling, better job training, access to jobs. By contrast, counting for subcultural differentiation seemed of secondary significance. (1988, p. 231)

Beyond the emerging theoretical and political distastefulness of subcultural perspectives, the 1960s also brought important empirical challenges to such perspectives. A growing number of studies simply failed to show support for the various theories outlined above. For example, Cohen's depiction

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of gangs as male, non-utilitarian, and malicious was viewed as overly narrow. It excluded from consideration girls'/women's criminality and delinquent gang activities done for profit (i.e., drug dealing).[1] Cloward and Ohlin's description of gangs was somewhat broader, with three ideal types outlined, but their theory was still haunted by lack of empirical verification of these forms of gangs. Of particular significance, a famous 1965 study by James Short and Fred Strodtbeck failed to verify the clear existence of these distinct subcultures. Their study of Chicago gangs revealed only one instance of a "retreatist gang" and no examples of the "criminal subculture" described by Cloward and Ohlin.

Empirical research also failed to verify that values varied substantially across class lines, racial/ethnic groups, regions of the country, or various other social groupings. Part of the difficulty subcultural theorists had in verifying the very existence of subcultural values was that values, per se, were difficult to assess. As a result, subcultural theorists interpreted criminal behavior as evidence of criminal values. This created tautological reasoning: oppositional (criminal) values, indicated by criminal behavior, were presumed to cause criminal behavior. Or, in the case of studies of the "southern subculture of violence," mere residence in the South was presumed to approximate exposure to pro-violence values. However, studies that actually measured values found little evidence of criminal values within any social stratum. For example, Short and Strodtbeck's study found that there was a uniformly high evaluation of "middle-class" values by middle-class boys, lower-class boys, and even gang members (see also Ball-Rokeach, 1973). Similarly, Hirschi's seminal test of an individual-level social control theory in *Causes of Delinquency* found few differences in values across delinquent and non-delinquent youths. Thus, the value conflict assumption on which the subcultural theories were based appeared highly questionable by the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

Systemic Theory and Attenuated Conventional Culture

Partially at the expense of subcultural theories, Hirschi's perspective on social control gained considerable momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. As discussed previously (see Chapter 3), this perspective is based on the assumption that there is *value consensus* in the sense that all segments of society condemn crime. Therefore, control theory is at complete odds with the notion of "deviant subcultures" that espouse the virtues of crime. Different cultural values—in terms of whether the content is criminal or conventional—

1. See Cohen and Short (1958) for an extension and discussion of "principal varieties of delinquent subcultures" (p. 23).

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do not distinguish criminals from noncriminals according to control theorists. However, differences in the strength of the ties or bonds to the cultural value system can distinguish offenders from nonoffenders. Some individuals are more closely tied to the system than others owing to their personal attachments and commitments and institutional involvements. These ties serve to control behavior, keeping it in line with conventional values. Those with weakened bonds, however, are less invested in conventional values. It is not that they do not share the values; they simply have less of an investment or stake in abiding by them.

The incompatibility between control theories and "cultural deviance" theories led Kornhauser to advocate an approach to understanding community rates of crime that relied purely on variation in neighborhood-level resident-based control and that was devoid of any notion of subcultural transmission of criminal values. Following Kornhauser's lead, as discussed in Chapter 3, Shaw and McKay's work was reconceptualized in the 1970s and 1980s as a community-level systemic control model. This model posited that community indicators of "disorganization" were related to crime because they diminished the community's capacity for forming strong neighborhood-level systems of personal and institutional ties that could effectively control unwanted behavior. The systemic theory and its core assumptions (i.e., the control theory belief that there was value consensus in society) were theoretically incompatible with the idea of value conflict and, thus, criminal subcultures.

This is not to say, however, that Kornhauser dismissed culture as unimportant in understanding community rates of crime. In fact, Kornhauser used the notion of "cultural disorganization," alongside "structural disorganization," as a key component of overall community disorganization. In doing so, she presented a new way of thinking about how culture might influence community crime. First, Kornhauser viewed structural disorganization as indicated most prominently by institutional and network instability, and this aspect of disorganization went on to dominate most work in the social disorganization tradition until around the turn into the twenty-first century. Using the language of the systemic model, structural disorganization was said to be manifested in the presence of weak private and parochial ties/control. Second, however, Kornhauser contended that cultural disorganization—also referred to as cultural attenuation—was indicated by weakened and obsolete subcultures, an unstable communal culture, and the irrelevance of societal culture.

As an advocate of control theory and a harsh critic of cultural deviance theory, Kornhauser believed in subcultures; she just did not believe in deviant subcultures. In other words, she recognized that urban areas experiencing immigration were quite diverse, with many subcultures represented. From

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Kornhauser's view, subcultures might express unique preferences in terms of things such as language, food, religious customs, and music. They did *not* differentially express criminal values because, in her view, the condemnation of crime was nearly universal, crossing all subcultures.

Strong subcultures of this sort could serve as an advantage for a community, as they tend to exert control over youths. However, Kornhauser offered that subcultures were unlikely to be strong in diverse, inner-city areas; instead, they were likely weak, or even obsolete. The attenuated capacity of subcultures to control youth in inner-city communities stems from such neighborhoods historically serving as areas of first-settlement for new immigrant or migrant groups. As such, the subcultures existing in these neighborhoods had been transplanted *from somewhere else*, with the likelihood being slim that they would be relevant or useful in an American inner city. For example, cultural values from a rural tightly knit community in another country might not have much relevance to kids who must negotiate life in urban America. Kornhauser explained that as subcultures were weakened, even to the point of becoming obsolete, an important source of control was lost. In such a context, subcultural values are no longer strongly enforced by families, and external control by families becomes, therefore, less effective.

However, beyond weak and/or obsolete subcultures, inner-city, crime-ridden communities also suffer from weakness in what Kornhauser referred to as "communal culture." The articulation of underlying values that unite community members, possibly across diverse subcultures, is necessary for effective community-based informal social control. If residents cannot articulate such a "community opinion," then community-based control will likely suffer. In inner-city areas with disproportionately higher rates of subcultures, there is likely a diminished capacity for achieving such communal culture.

Finally, broad societal culture—that is, mainstream American culture—must be strong within communities for effective social control. While Kornhauser assumed that all communities were composed of individual residents who largely bought into this general societal culture, the fact is that the culture is somewhat irrelevant in highly disadvantaged communities. For example, while employment (and legitimate income), stable and monogamous marriage, and in-wedlock childbearing might be valued, those values are not particularly "useful" in communities in which jobs and sources of legitimate income are scarce and the pool of "marriageable men" is shallow. Although residents in deprived communities may believe in conventional values, the conventional values are not particularly useful to many of them, and thus they are not enforced as strongly as in other, more advantaged contexts. This sort of cultural influence was articulated well in Ulf Hannerz's 1969 urban ethnography, *Soulside*, which was one of the few studies prior to

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Kornhauser's work to utilize the notion of attenuated culture: "Nobody says that infidelity, broken unions, and premarital or postmarital sex are 'good,' that is, morally valuable in their own right. But on a lower level, there may be a kind of ghetto-specific cultural influence, in that the community seems to have evolved a certain measure of tolerance for a certain non-conformity as opposed to the mainstream ideal" (p. 104). In this analysis of life in a Washington, DC, ghetto, Hannerz (1969, p. 189) goes on to say, "The mainstream [societal] norm is upheld in principle, but the circumstances provide some release for behavior which is not itself valued." In communities such as the one studied by Hannerz, societal values regarding employment, legitimate income, and in-wedlock childbearing become attenuated or dis-used, but not devalued. However, in their attenuated state, they cannot as effectively be used to control the behavior of residents.

In a more recent review of Kornhauser's discussion of cultural disorganization (or, cultural attenuation), Barbara Warner and Pamela Wilcox Rountree (2000) argue that the cultural attenuation perspective is fully compatible with and complementary to a control model of community crime (i.e., the systemic model). This conceptual integration is achieved "by assuming a *conventional* normative consensus and an absence of real cultural motivation toward crime, yet, at the same time, recognizing that the presence of behaviors contradicting conventional values varies across neighborhoods . . . the presence of these behaviors then diminishes the willingness of neighbors to intervene in more serious community behaviors" (p. 47). From this perspective, cultural (and subcultural) weakness can be viewed as key in understanding cross-community variation in crime while also avoiding the notion of "oppositional values."

In sum, Kornhauser set forth a community crime model whereby ecological characteristics such as low socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility create both cultural and structural disorganization. Cultural disorganization is characterized by weakened and diminished enforcement of subcultural, communal, and societal values. Again, the subcultural, communal, and societal values that are weakened are presumed to be "conventional" (i.e., involving the condemnation of crime). With attenuation of conventional values comes a diminished capacity for resident-based informal social control. From this perspective, "crime is caused by the *absence* of 'good,' prosocial culture, not by the presence of 'bad' culture" (Sampson and Bean, 2006, p. 22, emphasis in the original). In contrast to cultural disorganization, structural disorganization is characterized by weak or fractured interpersonal relations and institutional ties. Structural disorganization is also posited to reduce the effectiveness of community-based control. This combined structure-culture community disorganization model is depicted in Figure 5.1.

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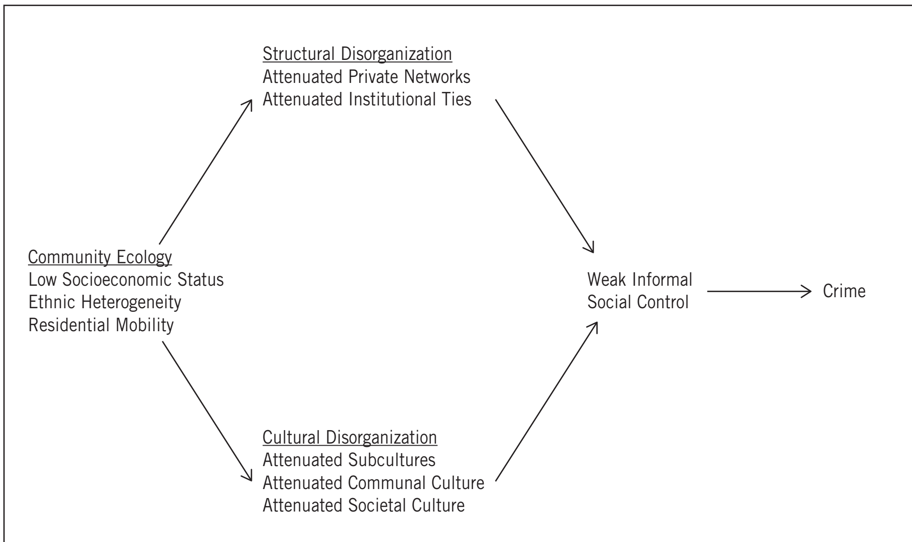

Figure 5.1 A Community Disorganization Model of Crime with Structural and Cultural Dimensions of Disorganization
Adapted from R.R. Kornhauser, *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models* (Paperback ed.). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 73.

Ethnographies of Urban Ghettos: Support for an Attenuation Perspective

Alongside Kornhauser's treatment of cultural disorganization were several important ethnographic studies published between the late 1960s and 1970s, such as that by the aforementioned Hannerz. These ethnographies implicitly supported the notion that cultural attenuation, as opposed to cultural deviance, characterized impoverished "slum" neighborhoods. Gerald Suttles's famous 1968 ethnography, *The Social Order of the Slum*, is another example. Suttles begins with a characterization of the poor, racially and ethnically diverse Addams area in Chicago as follows:

> Conventional norms are not rejected but differentially emphasized or suspended for established reasons. The vast majority of residents are quite conventional people. At the same time those who continue in good standing on public measures are often exceptionally tolerant and even encouraging to those who are "deviant." . . . Taken out of context many of the social arrangements of the Addams area may seem an illusory denial of the beliefs and values of the wider society. Seen in more holistic terms, the residents are bent on ordering local

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relations where the beliefs and values of the wider society do not provide adequate guidelines for conduct. (pp. 3–4)

Although Suttles suggests that provincial, territorial cultural groups emerge in such slum areas, and some appear supportive of deviance, his statements also offer that unconventional behavior is *not* primarily valued but *is* presumed to be situationally practical. Lee Rainwater reached similar conclusions in his research during the 1960s on the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in Saint Louis. In discussing the ghetto practices associated with the area—including dropping out of school, chronic unemployment, out-of-wedlock births, matrifocal families, drug addiction, and destruction of property—Rainwater (1967, p. 123) comments, "*The lower class does not have a separate system of basic values. Lower class people do not really 'reject middle class values.' It is simply that there whole experience with life teaches them that it is impossible to achieve a viable sense of self-esteem with those values*" (emphasis in the original). In short, lower-class behaviors are not reflective of lower-class aspirations or values.

Elijah Anderson's work, *A Place on the Corner*, is another ethnography that supports the view of cultural attenuation as opposed to cultural deviance in lower-class communities. Anderson's book, first published in 1978 (with a second edition in 2003), stemmed from his participant observation of a south side Chicago street corner and bar ("Jelly's") during his time as a doctoral student in sociology in the 1970s. Anderson began his research at Jelly's under the inspiration of Gerald Suttles at University of Chicago, and his work was clearly influenced by Suttles and the perspective he had offered in *The Social Order of the Slum*. Suttles ended up departing Chicago's faculty during the course of Anderson's studies, leaving, in Anderson's words, "a strongly felt vacancy" (Anderson, 2003, p. x). Anderson eventually transferred to Northwestern University to finish his Ph.D., where he continued his ethnographic research while working with Howard Becker.

In *A Place on the Corner*, Anderson details the social stratification system created through social interaction among the participants in the bar/street corner life (e.g., "the regulars," "the wineheads," and "the hoodlums"). Anderson describes a ghetto culture that is predominantly conventional in terms of value orientation, yet tolerant of unconventional behaviors when conventional behaviors seem less than useful: "Within the extended primary group at Jelly's, a 'visible means of support' and 'decency' appear to be the primary values, while 'toughness,' 'getting big money,' 'getting some wine,' and 'havin' some fun' are residual values, or values group members adopt after the 'props' supporting decency have for some reason been judged unviable, unavailable, or unattainable" (p. 209).

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In sum, in the decade spanning the late 1960s to the late 1970s, important reconceptualization of the role of culture in community crime occurred. Prior to this time period, subcultural theories that emphasized oppositional, deviant values among some segments of society were the norm. By the end of that period, however, there was more discussion of value consensus. Notably, the possibility was raised that those in lower-class communities are more tolerant of behaviors counter to mainstream values because conventional values and behaviors have little practical utility in inner-city contexts. Despite this work, it was structural disorganization that took center stage in the systemic theory that dominated community-level crime theory in the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter 3). Kornhauser's ideas about cultural disorganization and the ethnographic work that supported the concept were given relatively little attention, and scholars instead focused on weakened systems of private and parochial ties in an attempt to understand community crime. However, important seeds were sown in illustrating how cultural considerations could work within a community-control theoretical framework.

"Ghetto Behavior" in the Era of Deindustrialization

The notion of cultural attenuation discussed above allowed scholars to acknowledge the importance of community-level cultural influences without adhering to an assumption of value conflict and "cultural deviance." This perspective would be rejuvenated in an attempt to understand contemporary inner-city Black violence. The idea of cultural attenuation within a broader community disorganization framework reemerged most notably with the collaboration of Robert Sampson and William Julius Wilson in the mid-1990s, combining their respective work on the systemic model, on the one hand, and "ghetto-related behaviors," on the other hand.

The Truly Disadvantaged and Ghetto-Related Behaviors

As discussed in previous chapters, Wilson's 1987 book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, and his 1996 book, *When Work Disappears*, detailed demographic, social, and economic changes in many U.S. inner cities, especially those in the Northeast, the Middle Atlantic, and the Midwest. These changes, along with ineffective and discriminatory policy, created a unique milieu. Segregated housing offering restricted residential choices for Blacks. Further, extensive industrial job loss, and middle-class and White out-migration from the central cites had, by 1980, created predominantly minority and deeply impoverished inner cities. These extremely poor, typically African American areas also had high percentages of households that were female

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headed, thus exacerbating the poverty. In brief, there was an unprecedented *concentration* of economic disadvantage in deindustrialized central cities—more residents of the inner city than ever were poor.

With such concentration effects, inner-city residents had little exposure to others with jobs, higher incomes, and family stability (i.e., two-parent households). In other words, the concentration of disadvantage within the inner cities meant that those disadvantaged residents were increasingly *socially isolated*. The concentrated disadvantage and social isolation of inner cities, in turn, served to alter the cultural landscape of the inner city. While Wilson's intention was not to offer a theory of community culture and crime, he did comment on ghetto culture in the form of tolerances of unconventional behavior, in particular. Wilson suggested that unconventional behaviors—such as idleness among young males, an emphasis on overt sexuality, teenage childbearing, and drug dealing—had become accepted in urban ghettos. However, Wilson's argument was that cultural *acceptance* or *tolerance* was *not* due to such behaviors being culturally *valued*. Instead, Wilson argues that unconventional behaviors were tolerated in disadvantaged areas as a result of few conceivable options in terms of conventional, valued behaviors. The cultural norms regarding the acceptability of unconventional behaviors were thus loosened as an adaptive response to the extreme structural disadvantage. In turn, social isolation exacerbated this disadvantage-induced "loosening" of culture. With residents in these areas increasingly cut off from nonpoor neighbors, neighbors with steady jobs, and examples of family stability, Wilson argues that there are no "social buffers," thus allowing a ghetto culture to thrive:

> In neighborhoods in which nearly every family has at least one person who is steadily employed, the norms and behavior patterns that emanate from a life of regularized employment become part of the community gestalt. On the other hand, in neighborhoods in which most families do not have a steadily employed breadwinner, the norms and behavior patterns associated with the steady work compete with those associated with casual or infrequent work. Accordingly, the less frequent the regular contact with those who have steady and full-time employment (that is, the greater the degree of social isolation), the more likely that initial job performance will be characterized by tardiness, absenteeism, and thereby, low retention. (1987, p. 61)

The near absence of models for conventional behavior more readily allows the adaptive unconventional behavior to be seen as "the only way." The unconventional behaviors—what Wilson terms "ghetto-related behaviors"—are then transmitted, not by internalization of unconventional

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values but by precept. The behaviors do not thrive in the urban ghettos because they are representative of values, but because they are behavioral standards that are seen with great frequency.

Race, Concentrated Disadvantage, and Cognitive Landscapes

Although Wilson had discussed culture in the form of ghetto-related behaviors in *The Truly Disadvantaged* and *When Work Disappears*, his treatment of culture was not fully integrated into a theory of crime (that was not the intention of either book). However, in his collaborative work with Robert Sampson, such a theory began to emerge. While on faculty together at University of Chicago in 1995, Sampson and Wilson wrote an important book chapter, "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality." This chapter was discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to its importance to the image of the community as the truly disadvantaged. However, here its importance for helping shape and revitalize cultural theories is considered.

Sampson and Wilson outline a community disorganization model that integrates both social structural and cultural disorganization. Many of their theoretical ideas overlapped with those proposed earlier by Kornhauser, Hannerz, Anderson, and others. However, Sampson and Wilson combined the notions of structural and cultural disorganization to explain higher rates of crime in African American communities most specifically. Further, they firmly situated the emergence of both structural and cultural disorganization not only within community-level ecological characteristics but also within broader, extracommunity, political-economic forces. The resulting framework that they outlined nicely integrates Sampson's previous work in the systemic tradition with Wilson's previous work on the macro-social forces behind urban inequality and resulting "ghetto-related behaviors."

Their perspective posits the interactive influence of extracommunity forces (e.g., structural transformation of the economy in the form of deindustrialization, out-migration of Whites and middle-class Blacks, and discriminatory and segregationist decisions about housing) and community-level characteristics (e.g., extreme poverty, social isolation, residential instability). More specifically, Sampson and Wilson suggest that these forces interact to create both structural and cultural disorganization. In terms of structural disorganization, Sampson and Wilson emphasize that, in disadvantaged contexts, systems of private and parochial network linkages are fractured and/or ineffective in terms of providing collective supervision. In terms of cultural disorganization, Sampson and Wilson (1995, p. 50) argue that norms regarding appropriate standards, expectations of conduct, and tolerances of behavior—what they term "cognitive landscapes"—are shaped such

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that "crime, disorder, and drug use are less than fervently condemned and hence expected as a part of everyday life." It is not that crime, disorder, and drug use are valued, but they are tolerated and accepted because mainstream behaviors, in extremely disadvantaged contexts, become "existentially irrelevant" (p. 51). They emphasize that these cognitive landscapes are *ecologically structured norms*. Hence, they make a point that they are norms that stem from a disadvantaged context rather than representing a monolithic subculture. Still, Sampson and Wilson do not shy away from delineating their importance in community rates of crime. They attribute causal significance to cultural disorganization by advocating the view, much like Wilson had done in his earlier work, that the tolerance of unconventional behaviors creates a context in which these behaviors can flourish to an even greater extent. When unconventional behavior is tolerated, it is seen with greater frequency. When it is seen with greater frequency, "the transmission of these modes of behavior by precept, as in role modeling, is more easily facilitated" (Sampson and Wilson, 1995, p. 51).

Sampson and Wilson argued that their framework is helpful for understanding the relationship between race and crime in the United States. In their view, communities are key in understanding the race-crime relationship. They suggest that the causes for Black rates of crime versus White rates of crime are not different. Instead, the structural-cultural integrative framework they offer is the presumed explanation for both rates. However, Blacks are disproportionately embedded in community contexts characterized by structural and cultural disorganization. As outlined in Wilson's earlier work on the "truly disadvantaged," deindustrialization, out-migration, and segregated housing had created a concentration of extremely poor, *predominantly minority*, inner-city residents. Thus, race is intertwined with the whole notions of "concentrated disadvantage" and "social isolation." Given that these factors are precursors to structural and cultural disorganization, it is no wonder that rates of crime among Black Americans greatly exceed rates for White Americans. In what has been referred to as the "racial invariance hypothesis," Sampson and Wilson argue that if Whites and Blacks experienced equivalent levels of community disadvantage and isolation, then racial differences in cultural attenuation and crime would disappear.

Some research supports their thesis of racial invariance (see Chapter 4 for more detail on this point). For example, in Lauren Krivo and Ruth Peterson's analysis of Columbus, Ohio, neighborhoods, structural disadvantage had a much stronger effect on community crime than did racial composition (percent Black). In addition, although Black neighborhoods were much more likely than White neighborhoods to be extremely disadvantaged, the effects of extreme disadvantage on crime were not worse in Black neighborhoods (Krivo and Peterson, 1996; see also Peterson and Krivo, 2005, 2012). However, when cultural attenuation is included along with structural disadvantage

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in tests of racial invariance, the findings are more nuanced. Sampson and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch analyzed data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN, discussed more fully in Chapter 8), and found, first, that neighborhood-level concentrated disadvantage was positively related to tolerance for deviance (or, negatively related to cultural attenuation). Once levels of disadvantage were held constant across neighborhoods, racial differences in tolerance for deviance were still evident, though African Americans and Latino Americans were *less tolerant* of deviance than Whites (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998).

Code of the Street and Beyond

Anderson's Code of the Street: Decent and Street Families

While Sampson and Wilson were articulating their ideas about structurally rooted cognitive landscapes and the implications for racial difference in crime, Elijah Anderson was involved in intense ethnographic study of Philadelphia neighborhoods. Most prominently featured in this work was the extremely disadvantaged, predominantly Black, North Philadelphia. His research on North Philadelphia was reported in several articles and two books—*Streetwise* in 1990 and in 1999 *Code of the Street*. The latter work is arguably his most famous in terms of discussing cultural influences on community crime and is the focus of the discussion that follows.

Anderson's work is most notable for its delineation of a "street code," or set of informal rules that govern public interaction in disadvantaged, socially isolated neighborhoods like North Philadelphia. Anderson offered that an emergent cultural code—the code of the street—establishes a new set of standards for status and respect in contexts where obtaining such respect through conventional channels (i.e., educational and occupational achievement) seems out of reach.

The code counters mainstream values in that it promotes the use of violence as an avenue for obtaining respect. In particular, public displays of physical toughness are expected, and violent retaliation to insults and other forms of disrespect is prescribed. Displays of toughness and violence are important not only for respect purposes, however. As Anderson describes it, they are essential for social control and self-protection in severely disadvantaged communities that are distrustful of police. In fact, as alluded to above, it is that isolation from mainstream life—including isolation from public agencies such as the police—that is part of the reason for the emergence of the code in the first place. According to Anderson (1999, p. 10), "The code of the street emerges where the influence of the police ends and personal responsibility for one's safety is felt to begin."

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The code of the street is thought to pervade public life in the inner city. However, Anderson is clear that not all those who reside in the inner city actually *believe in* the morality expressed in the code. Instead, Anderson (1999, p. 35) describes two competing value orientations characterizing families in the inner city, which he termed "decent" and "street": "Almost everyone residing in poor inner-city neighborhoods is struggling financially and therefore feels a certain distance from the rest of America, but there are degrees of alienation, captured by the terms 'decent' and 'street' or 'ghetto,' suggesting social types. The decent family and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories."

Street individuals have typically been born into "street families" characterized by a number of dysfunctional qualities, including the following: (1) sporadic and/or superficial parenting (i.e., children are often unsupervised, without parental contact); (2) aggressive parenting (i.e., yelling and hitting); (3) chronic unemployment; (4) a limited understanding of financial priorities and consequences, leading to mounting bills and insufficiently fed and clothed children; (5) a tendency toward self-destructive behavior (i.e., heavy substance use/addiction); and (6) a deep-seated bitterness toward "the system" that seems stacked against them. Youths raised in such street families are taught to fight at an early age and to respond with violence when crossed. More generally, from a young age, street individuals are socialized according to the code of the street and thus come to believe that violence and other displays of toughness are acceptable and, in fact, valued. As Anderson (1990, pp. 69–70) illustrates:

> At an early age, often before they start school and without much adult supervision, children from street-oriented families gravitate toward the streets, where they must be ready to "hang," to socialize competitively with peers. These children have a great deal of latitude and are allowed to rip and run up and down the streets. . . . The social meaning of fighting [for respect] becomes clarified as these children come to appreciate the real consequences of winning and losing. And the child's understanding of the code becomes more refined but also an increasingly important part of his or her working conception of the world.

In contrast, Anderson describes decent individuals as typically raised in families that value hard work, self-reliance, and education. Parents within these "decent families" are often among the working poor as opposed to dealing with chronic unemployment. They display concern about, yet have a real hope for, the future. Decent families place more confidence in societal institutions, such as schools and churches. In fact, decent families often raise their

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children “within the church” and utilize strict (yet not overly aggressive) child-rearing practices. In short, youths from decent families are socialized to reject the values of the code and accept mainstream values instead.

Although decent individuals are socialized against internalizing the values of the code of the street (prescribing violence, toughness), Anderson suggests that decent individuals must know and use the code situationally to achieve status and, sometimes, in order to survive. In public, decent youths inevitably will confront street youths whose interactions with others are shaped by the code. Decent youths must be able to “act street” even if they do not “believe street” if they want to be viewed as strong, as having “juice,” and commanding respect—all of which helps define their self-worth. Anderson (1990, pp. 99–100) describes this “dilemma of the decent kid” as follows:

> Even the most decent child in the neighborhood must at some point display a degree of commitment to the street. Life under the code might be considered a kind of game played by rules that are partly specified but partly emergent. The young person is encouraged to be familiar with the rules of the game and even to use them as a metaphor for life—or else feel left out, become marginalized, and, ultimately, risk being rolled on. So the young person is inclined to enact his own particular role, to show his familiarity with the game, and more specifically his street knowledge, so as to gain points with others.

Anderson refers to the performance of the street code among decent individuals as “code-switching.” Thus, code-switching is the process whereby decent individuals who adhere to mainstream values act, in particular situations, in a manner that suggests they are “street.” Again, Anderson claims it is a necessary tool among decent individuals for surviving the tough streets of a community in which respect is hard fought and easily lost and where “young people who project decency are generally not given much respect” (1999, p. 100). Thus, through this process of code-switching, the presence of the street code in disadvantaged neighborhoods can lead decent individuals to sometimes act in ways that are quite different from their individual value orientations but that are essential for “saving face” in public. For example, if “disrespected,” decent youths must be willing to display toughness and a willingness to fight, lest they be seen as weak and vulnerable to victimization. Anderson (1990, p. 105) describes this ability to code-switch as “crucial to solving the dilemma of being decent in a street-oriented environment.” Unlike street-oriented individuals, for whom “the street is in the person,” decent youths who can code-switch have a broader behavioral repertoire—“a wide array of styles from which to choose how to act” (Anderson, 1990, p. 105).

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Culture as Values, Culture in Action, and the Cultural Frame of Legal Cynicism

The various ways that street codes affect behavior in street versus decent individuals, as implied by Anderson, has been echoed in other recent work yet framed as a distinction between "culture as values" versus "culture in action" (e.g., Berg and Stewart 2013; Kirk and Papachristos, 2015; Lamont and Small, 2008; Matsueda, 2015; Sampson and Bean, 2006; Swidler, 1986). In many ways, these terms represent a contemporary update of the "cultural deviance" versus "attenuated culture" perspectives. From a culture-as-values perspective, cultural effects are exerted through internalized values that have been transmitted and learned through social interaction. Values prescribed by a neighborhood culture are thus internalized by residents, with the individual values, in turn, affecting behavior. Hence, there really is no effect of "community culture" on behavior that is distinct from the effects of individual values from the culture-as-values perspective. The culture-as-values perspective is apparent in Anderson's (1999) description of street-oriented individuals. As described above, Anderson argued that those with a street orientation internalize the code of the street at an early age. Their actions in accordance with the code thus represent their deeply held values and constrain their behavioral repertoire.

On the other hand, the culture-in-action perspective proposes that culture is not deeply embedded within individuals—that is, as internalized values—but rather it is something people perform situationally in the process of social interaction. The culture-in-action perspective refers to culture as a tool kit of sorts, providing approval for the use of a repertoire of behaviors appropriate for use in specific situations. Thus, rather than culture reflecting a value orientation, the culture in action perspective views culture as providing behavioral tools for navigating social interactions in situationally appropriate ways. The culture-in-action perspective aligns with Sampson and Wilson's (1995) discussion of cognitive landscapes, whereby behaviors that are not valued are tolerated nonetheless in situations where they are deemed useful. The culture-in-action perspective is also quite consistent with Anderson's (1990) description of the code-switching among decent youths. Again, though decent youths do not value the code of the street, they often choose to "act street" (via code-switching) in certain public encounters, where maintaining an image of toughness and respect is necessary for respect and personal safety. In such situations, acting street is a cultural survival tool.

One very recent and still unfolding line of inquiry focused on community culture centers around the concept of "legal cynicism." Legal cynicism theory is grounded in aspects of Anderson's treatment of culture, Sampson and Wilson's notion of cognitive landscapes, and contemporary notions of

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culture in action. It is playing a more prominent role in contemporary work on community culture and crime, led in large part by the efforts of Sampson and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch and David Kirk and Andrew Papachristos.

Sampson and Bartusch (1998, p. 778) first introduced the concept of legal cynicism as "anomie about law" and claimed that it was a cognitive landscape—an ecologically structured normative orientation regarding the legitimacy of law and its norms; it was presented as contextual in nature, distinct from individual values regarding antisocial behavior. They state, "In the classic Durkheimian sense, anomie refers to a state of normlessness in which the rules of the dominant society (and hence the legal system) are no longer binding in a community . . . anomie in this sense is conceived as part of a social system and not merely a property of the individual" (p. 782; see also Bartusch, 2010). Sampson and Bartusch (1998) presented analyses illustrating that legal cynicism emerged from community-level structural disadvantage and residential instability rather than from individual characteristics such as race.

Kirk and Papachristos (2011, p. 1197) develop the concept of legal cynicism beyond the "anomie about law" definition provided by Sampson and Bartusch. In the process, Kirk and Papachristos also more fully root legal cynicism in processes of social interaction. They stress that legal cynicism is a cultural frame "through which individuals interpret the functioning and viability of the law and its agents." More specifically, *legal cynicism* refers to a view among citizens that the police are illegitimate, nonresponsive to residents' needs and calls for assistance, and unable to adequately provide public safety (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011, 2015). Cynicism as a cultural frame has two major sources: neighborhood-level concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood-wide experiences with police. First, concentrated disadvantage breeds a general alienation from society—a feeling that "the dominant societal institutions (of which the police and the justice system are emblematic) will offer them little in the way of security, either economic or personal" (2011, p. 1198). Second, in terms of cynicism emerging from neighborhood-wide experiences with police, Kirk and Papachristos point to literature suggesting that police are less likely to file incident reports in high-crime neighborhoods and are more likely to harass and use force (or threats thereof) against suspects in minority neighborhoods, racially mixed neighborhoods, and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The cynicism that some residents feel becomes a more pervasive cultural frame through cultural transmission, according to Kirk and Papachristos (2011, pp. 1201–1202):

> Direct experiences with harassing police may influence an individual's cynicism, but this cynicism becomes cultural through social

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> interaction. In this sense, individuals' own experiential-based perception of the law becomes solidified through a collective process whereby residents develop a shared meaning of the behavior of the law and the viability of the law to ensure their safety. . . . In this sense, perceptions and injustices of the past become part of a legacy that is transmitted to new generations.

Therefore, Kirk and Papachristos stress that individuals in the same neighborhood might have different views of law (variable in the extent to which such views are cynical), legal cynicism is the *collective view of law* that emerges from social interaction and that exists independent of individual views.

Legal cynicism has consequences for neighborhood rates of violence in that it serves to constrain perceived courses of action for resolving disputes (much like the street-code-constrained behavioral choices for Anderson's street youths). In brief, legal cynicism increases the likelihood that residents will take law into their own hands in order to address grievances. Consistent with a culture-in-action perspective, Kirk and Papachristos contend that any dispute resolution through violence that emerges from legal cynicism is not viewed as a representation of internalized values defining violence as favorable action. Rather, it is representative of appropriate action in a situation in which reliance on police is considered unviable (for further discussion of legal cynicism, see Chapter 8).

Empirical Support

A number of empirical studies have examined Anderson's suggestions regarding effects of individual adherence to the code of the street and/or effects of a neighborhood-level street culture, net of individual values. Eric Stewart and his colleagues have been at the forefront of this research with a series of high-profile studies using data on more than seven hundred African American youths from both Georgia and Iowa (as part of the Family and Community Health Study [FCHS]). For example, analysis of these by Stewart and Simons (2006) indicated that neighborhood disadvantage positively affected individual-level street-code beliefs. In turn, street code beliefs were significantly and positively related to violent behavior, controlling for neighborhood disadvantage (see also Brezina et al., 2004; Stewart, Simons, and Conger, 2002).

A subsequent study by Stewart and Simons (2010) provides perhaps the most rigorous test of the various ways in which street codes might function to affect violence according to Anderson's work. This more recent study extended the earlier Stewart and Simons work by analyzing the FCHS data using multilevel models, allowing them to examine the effect of a

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neighborhood-level street culture, alongside with but independent of individual-level street-code beliefs. Such an approach is closely aligned with Anderson's discussion of the street code as functioning through both individual-level adherence to it values and through an emergent property of a collective that might affect behavior even among individuals who do not internalize street values (i.e., decent youths). This latter study by Stewart and Simons showed that neighborhood-level street culture did, indeed, affect violent behavior above and beyond the effect of individual-level street-code beliefs. Furthermore, neighborhood-level street culture magnified the positive effects of individual-level street-code beliefs on violence.

Jody Miller's qualitative research on adolescents in disadvantaged inner-city Saint Louis neighborhoods also illustrates how the street code can affect community crime. However, Miller explores the code-crime linkage through women's victimization experiences. Miller emphasizes that the toughness and masculinity stressed in the code serve to validate the mistreatment of women, thus placing young women in communities with a pervasive street culture at heightened risk for sexual harassment and sexual assault. In fact, twenty-five of the thirty-five young women (71 percent) interviewed by Miller reported that young men had made sexual comments that made them (the women) feel uncomfortable. Seventeen of the thirty-five women (49 percent) stated that young men had grabbed or touched them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable. Miller's male subjects indicated that such actions were fun and status enhancing. They typically defined the actions as "play." In contrast, Miller's female subjects saw such actions as "playin' *too much*" (2008, pp. 82–83).

Other community crime studies focus less on the individual versus contextual influence of street code effects and more on the simultaneous effects of structural and cultural disorganization. Barbara Warner's research, appearing in *Criminology* in 2003, is one of the best examples of such work to date. Her analysis of sixty-six high-drug-use neighborhoods examined the effects on informal social control of structural organization, in the form of social ties, and cultural organization, in the form of a collective perception of widespread conventional values. She measured this latter concept by asking respondents within the studied neighborhoods about their perceptions of their *neighbors'* belief in conventional values such as "it is important to get a good education," "it is important to be honest," and "selling drugs is always wrong." In other words, her measure of cultural organization—or what she termed cultural strength—was based on the aggregated perceived values of *neighbors' values*. The effect of this measure of cultural organization was estimated net of the residents own reported conventional values. Warner's results indicated that both neighborhood-level cultural strength and neighborhood-level social ties were positively related to informal social

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control, net of collective conventional values. A subsequent study by Warner and Burchfield (2011) found that weak community culture in the form of pluralistic ignorance, or the underestimation of the level of conventional values among neighbors, was negatively related to neighborhood-level informal social control. This effect was found alongside a positive effect of community social ties and a negative effect of community-level faith in police on informal social control. In another important study that integrated structural and cultural disorganization, Kirk and Papachristos (2011) found that both structural disorganization and legal cynicism were related to community homicides.

Conclusion

The study of culture remains one of the most popular approaches to understanding variable community rates of crime in the United States. However, this tradition has arrived at this historical place after an intellectual journey that has taken many twists and turns. That journey largely began with the foundational work of Shaw and McKay, who had originally indicated that subcultures transmitting criminal values emerged in disorganized communities. Subsequent theorizing by Cohen and then by Cloward and Ohlin elaborated that subcultures emerged in communities in which access to legitimate opportunities for success were unavailable. Cloward and Ohlin also emphasized the importance of access to illegitimate opportunities, noting that the type of crime engaged in by subcultures was a function of neighborhood organization and criminal opportunities.

The perspective of community subcultures rooted in strain gave way to purer cultural perspectives in which it was posited that nearly all lower-class community members held values supportive of crime. By the late 1960s, however, these perspectives became seen as overly conservative and divisive. Perspectives that emphasized value consensus were thus more palatable in this era. The decade spanning the late 1960s to the late 1970s, in fact, was marked by Kornhauser's theoretical articulation of "cultural attenuation," as well as several important ethnographies that supported the idea. From this perspective, "ghetto-related behaviors" were recognized but not valued, even by those participating in them. Instead, all were presumed to value conventional or "middle-class" values. However, behavior inconsistent with those values was *tolerated* (but not valued) in disadvantaged contexts where conventional values were not particularly relevant—where conventional values were impractical given the community circumstances.

After Kornhauser's articulation of "cultural attenuation," alongside ethnographies in support of the idea, the concept sat largely idle in community-crime theory for a decade. However, since the late 1980s, spearheaded by the

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work of Wilson, Sampson, and Anderson, the prevailing paradigm for understanding community crime has been one that recognizes both structural and cultural disorganization, with much of this work assuming that cultural influences are due to situational culture in action as opposed to an enduring, value-based opposition to mainstream values.

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