PART II

The Chicago School: The City, Social Disorganization, and Crime

As the United States proceeded into the 20th century, individualistic theories of crime enjoyed substantial popularity (Gould, 1981). Cesare Lombroso's biological theory, for example, was widely read and accepted (Lindesmith and Levin, 1937). In 1939, Harvard anthropologist E. A. Hooton not only claimed boldly that "criminals are organically inferior," but also proposed that "the elimination of crime can be effected only by the extirpation of the physically, mentally, and morally unfit; or by their complete segregation in a social aseptic environment" (quoted in Vold and Bernard, 1986: 6). Hooton's work may have been extreme, even for its time (see Merton and Montagu, 1940), but it represented a way of thinking that persists nearly a century later: The seeds of crime lie within people, and the only way to protect public safety is to incapacitate this dangerous class (see Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; cf. Cullen et al., 1997, and Gordon, 1994).

Other social observers in the early part of the century, however, criticized these individualistic theories for their myopia. While criminal anthropologists like Lombroso and Hooton focused their attention on discerning whether criminals had larger foreheads or more tattoos than noncriminals, they ignored the larger changes in society that were occurring around them. The United States was rapidly moving into the modern era, transforming itself from a land sprinkled with small, stable farming communities into a land dominated by crowded cities that were centered around booming industries and whose residents were constantly in flux. For these social observers, it defied common sense not to see how these vast changes were intimately implicated in the cause of crime. In fact, they claimed that our understanding of the origins and prevention of criminal conduct depended on a careful study of how the forces *outside* individuals prompted their willingness to break the law.

Social Disorganization in the City

Perhaps nowhere was social change more rapid and more dramatic than in the city of Chicago. When first incorporated in 1833, Chicago had a population of just over 4,000. By 1890, this number had climbed to 1 million; and in just 20 years, the population had doubled to 2 million (Palen, 1981). Sheer numbers, however, capture only part of the changes that were taking place. Like other large cities, Chicago was the settling place for virtually every racial and ethnic group, as African Americans traveled to the North in search of a better life and immigrants from Europe ended their journey in the "windy city" that butted up against Lake Michigan. These urban newcomers typically secured work at and settled in the shadows of factories erected in the center of the city. Their lives were hard—they worked long hours in the factories and lived in overcrowded tenements dirtied by industrial pollution. Upton Sinclair captured the social reality

of these inner-city neighborhoods in the title of his book *The Jungle* (1905).

In this context, it may not be surprising that scholars at the University of Chicago believed that the key to understanding crime lay not in studying the traits of individuals but in studying the traits of neighborhoods. Did it make a difference, they asked, if a child grew up in an inner-city community that was characterized by poverty, a mixing together of diverse peoples (i.e., "heterogeneity"), and by people constantly moving in and, when able, moving out (i.e., "transiency")? And if so, might not the solution to crime lie more in changing neighborhoods than in changing people?

This line of inquiry was developed most clearly by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942 [Chapter 3 in this volume]), who worked at the Institute for Social Research in Chicago and who were deeply influenced by the thinking of sociologists at the University of Chicago. To explain how cities such as Chicago develop, Ernest Burgess (1967 [1925]) had theorized that urban areas grow through a process of continual expansion from their inner core toward outer areas. As this growth process matures, we find cities that have a central business or industrial area. Just outside this area is the "zone in transition." It is here that impoverished newcomers settle, attracted by factory jobs and inexpensive housing. In a series of concentric circles, three more zones exist outside the inner city; Burgess called these the "zone of workingmen's homes," the "residential zone," and the "commuters' zone." These areas are settled by people who have adjusted to city life and have accumulated the resources to leave the zone in transition.

Shaw and McKay believed that Burgess's theory of the city might help direct their investigations of juvenile delinquency. If Burgess was correct, then rates of delinquency should be higher in the inner-city areas. In these locations, the intersection of persistent poverty, rapid population growth, heterogeneity, and transiency combined to disrupt the core social institutions of society such as the family; that is, these conditions caused *social disorganization*. They hypothesized that delinquency would be higher in these communities and lower in neighborhoods that were more affluent and stable (i.e., "organized").

But how would they test these ideas? In an innovative and enormous effort in data collection, whose results were published in *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* (1942), Shaw and McKay analyzed how measures of crime—such as youths referred to the juvenile court, truancy, and recidivism—were distributed in the zones of the city. By hand, they mapped the addresses of each delinquent, which they then compiled to compute rates of delinquency by small census area and then by city zone. They discovered that over time, rates of crime by *area* remained relatively the same—regardless, that is, of which ethnic group resided there. This finding suggested that characteristics of the area, not of the individuals living in the area, regulated levels of delinquency. They also learned, as their theory predicted, that crime rates were pronounced in the zone of transition and became progressively lower as one moved away from the inner city toward the outer zones. This finding supported their contention that social disorganization was a major cause of delinquency (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 30–31).

Just how did social disorganization cause delinquency? Unfortunately, Shaw and McKay did not supply a refined discussion of this concept in which they systematically explored the dimensions of disorganization and how each one was criminogenic (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). Even so, they broadly suggested that social disorganization referred to the breakdown of the social institutions in a community. In the inner city, then, families would be disrupted, schools would be marked by disorder, adult-run activities for youths would be sparse, churches would be poorly attended, and political groups would be ineffectual. When such a pervasive breakdown occurred, adults would be unable to control youths or to stop competing forms of criminal organization from emerging (e.g., gangs, vice activities). This combination was highly criminogenic. Freed from adult control, youths roamed the streets, where they came into contact with

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Shaw and McKay gained many of their insights on the process by which youths become embedded in delinquency from in-depth interviews—"life histories"—that they conducted with wayward adolescents (see, e.g., Shaw, 1966 [1930]). In *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1976 [1931]), for example, Shaw compiled the story of Sidney Blotzman, who by age 16 had engaged in numerous crimes, including robbery and sexual assault. Shaw recorded that Sidney had begun his "career in delinquency" by age 7, a career that persisted and grew more serious as he matured. Referring to Sidney's story, Shaw noted that due to his associations with older delinquents and adult criminals, the boy "began to identify himself with the criminal world and to embody in his own philosophy of life the moral values which prevailed in the criminal groups with which he had contact" (p. 228).

But why was Sidney exposed to these criminogenic influences? Here, Shaw reminds the reader that Sidney "lived in one of the most deteriorated and disorganized sections of the city" (p. 229). In these communities, continued Shaw, "the conventional traditions, neighborhood institutions, and public opinion, through which neighborhoods usually effect a control over the behavior [of the] child, were largely disintegrated" (p. 229). The community, however, "was not only disorganized and thus ineffective as a unit of control"; in addition, "various forms of stealing and many organized delinquent and criminal gangs were prevalent in the area" (p. 229). These criminal groups competed for the lives, in effect, of the area's children. "These groups," observed Shaw, "exercised a powerful influence and tended to create a community spirit which not only tolerated but actually fostered delinquent and criminal practices" (p. 229).

In Parts III and V, we will discuss two theoretical traditions whose roots extend to the work of Shaw and McKay: differential association/social learning theory and control theory. Thus, the work of Edwin Sutherland (Chapter 7) draws directly on Shaw and McKay's contentions that social areas have different mixes of criminal and conventional influences, and that the exposure to and learning of criminal values, mainly by associating with others in the same neighborhood, is a key source of crime. Sutherland captures these ideas in his "theory of differential association," which is an effort to systematize the insights of Shaw and McKay and of other Chicago school theorists (see, e.g., Thrasher's 1927 work, *The Gang*). Similarly, early statements of control theory, such as that by Reckless (1961) and that by Reiss (1951)—both of whom studied at the University of Chicago—build directly from Shaw and McKay's observations and helped to lay the foundation for today's control theories.

It is ironic that in contemporary criminology, these two traditions, which branched off from Shaw and McKay, now are seen as rival theories of crime (cf. Akers [1998] and Matsueda [1988] with Costello [1997], Gottfredson and Hirschi [1990], and Kornhauser [1978]). Although some efforts have been made to *integrate* these two perspectives (see Thornberry, 1987), most often advocates of learning and control theories see themselves as advancing incompatible perspectives, only one of which can be correct.

Revitalizing Social Disorganization Theory

Although Shaw and McKay's work was read by subsequent generations of criminologists, by the 1960s, their theory of social disorganization had lost its appeal and its ability to direct research. Instead, other theories, advocating new ways of thinking and identifying new questions to be answered, ascended and captured scholars' attention (see Cole, 1975; Pfohl, 1985). Beginning in the 1980s, however, Shaw and McKay's disorganization perspective earned renewed interest—an interest that has remained until this day.

In part, criminologists reconsidered the value of disorganization theory because of a more general interest in the "ecology" of crime. This approach analyzes how crime rates vary by *ecological units*, such as neighborhoods, cities,

countries, states, or nations. (Recall that Shaw and McKay examined how delinquency rates varied by zones of the city.) This approach is often seen as being on the "macro level." In *micro*-level theories, the concern is with identifying how characteristics of *individuals* (e.g., personality, how much strain a person feels) are related to their involvement in criminal behavior. In *macro*-level theories, however, individuals and their traits are not studied; the concern is only with how the characteristics of geographical areas, such as whether they are disorganized, influence crime rates.

Beyond the general interest in ecological research (see Blau and Blau, 1982; Reiss and Tonry, 1986), Robert Sampson, Robert Bursik, and colleagues showed the relevance of using Shaw and McKay's theory to illuminate crime in today's society. These contributions are discussed below.

A Classic Test

Sampson (1986) argued that crime was high in inner cities because the residents had lost the capacity to exercise "informal social control." Especially in neighborhoods where most families were "broken," the adult resources needed to supervise youths and involve them in wholesome activities were depleted. Coming from a broken home per se was not the key issue, said Sampson. Rather, it was living in a neighborhood where a high proportion of families were headed by a single parent that created a context in which control could not be exercised effectively. Like Shaw and McKay, Sampson stressed that independent of the traits of individuals, communities varied in their capacity to regulate conduct and suppress criminal behavior.

With W. Byron Groves, Sampson (1989) extended this research. Using data from the British Crime Survey, the authors tested Shaw and McKay's idea that in communities marked by poverty, heterogeneity, residential transiency, and family disruption, informal relations and controls would be weakened and, as a result, crime would be high. Previously, empirical tests of Shaw and McKay's perspective had only measured the structural "antecedents" or causes of social disorganization and then examined whether these factors were related to crime (e.g., do communities with more residential mobility have higher rates of crime). These studies took for granted that the social condition in between these structural factors (on the "left" side of the causal chain) and illegal conduct (on the "right" side of the causal chain) was social disorganization. In large part, scholars did not measure social disorganization directly because the existing data sets did not contain information on the extent to which community members were socially integrated and able to exercise social control over wayward conduct. Instead, they were able to compile data on structural factors from the U.S. Census and data on crime rates from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. Meanwhile, they had no direct measures of the "black box" that lay in between structural factors and crime rates. Again, they merely assumed that this "black box" was a weak or "disorganized" community.

The special value of Sampson and Groves's study was that the British Crime Survey included questions that could be combined to measure whether community members were willing to supervise rowdy teenagers, had friends locally, and participated in neighborhood voluntary organizations. The more these conditions were present, hypothesized Sampson and Groves, the greater the level of social organization; the less these conditions were present, the greater the level of social disorganization. When Sampson and Groves conducted their statistical analysis, they discovered that, to a large extent, the structural factors predicted their measures of social disorganization and, in turn, that weakly organized areas did indeed have higher crime rates. In short, their data lent support to Shaw and McKay's conclusion that social disorganization was a significant cause of community rates of crime.

It is possible, of course, that other community factors, such as the presence of delinquent subcultures, could also intervene between structural

factors such as poverty and transiency and crime (Veysey and Messner, 1999). Still, subsequent research has replicated Sampson and Groves's research with data drawn a decade later from the British Crime Survey, thus indicating that Sampson and Groves's results have proven to be consistent over time (Lowenkamp et al., 2003; see also Taylor, 2001). More generally, Sampson and Groves's article furnished persuasive evidence that the social disorganization perspective had a measure of validity and warranted further empirical and theoretical investigation. Indeed, this article generated considerable excitement and did much to revitalize Shaw and McKay's theory. It was not a theory tied to a particular historical juncture—pre–World War II America—but could provide insights into community differences in rates of crime in contemporary times.

Systemic Control: Private, Parochial, and Public Ties

Beginning with Sampson and Groves's classic study, tests of social disorganization theory began to draw from the *systemic model* of community attachment within the sociology literature (e.g., Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974) in order to measure *how* communities organized for effective social control. This systemic model of community attachment views the community as a "complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes" (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974: 329). Using this systemic perspective on community, scholars such as Sampson and Groves presumed that social disorganization and its accompanying weak social control emerged from an absence of strong systems of *friendship, kinship,* and *associational ties* among neighborhood residents. Conversely, a systemic conceptualization of social disorganization theory suggested that neighborhood-level density of friendship, kinship, and associational ties enhanced informal social control, thus lowering crime rates.

Key work by Robert Bursik and Harold Grasmick extended the systemic model's emphasis beyond its original focus on internal neighborhood ties as sources of organization and control. In their 1993 book, *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control* (see Chapter 4 in this part), Bursik and Grasmick present a more complex version of the systemic model that considers both intra-community and extra-community relational ties and their respective effects on neighborhood rates of crime. Specifically, they delineate three distinct types of social ties that can enhance social control of crime: *private* ties, *parochial* ties, and *external/public* ties. Private ties refer to primary and intimate interpersonal relationships, including friendships and kinships. Parochial ties are less intimate relations among residents of a neighborhood that emerge due to shared institutional or organizational affiliations (e.g., their children attend the same school, they belong to the same church) or due to neighbors' shared responsibility for supervising community youth (i.e., neighbors looking out for one another's children despite not being close friends themselves). Public ties refer to connections with agencies outside the community that could supply the neighborhood with additional resources for controlling crime. Examples of public ties are community members' solicitation of assistance or resources from local police, city council members, state and federal politicians, and area business leaders. Bursik and Grasmick suggested that private, parochial, and public ties were important sources of control, which they termed private control, parochial control, and public control, respectively. In turn, all three forms of control were theorized to curb neighborhood rates of crime.

Again, the key contribution of Bursik and Grasmick's work to the continued development of social disorganization theory is its explicit recognition that social control of crime might stem from extra-community linkages (i.e., public ties) in addition to intracommunity networks (i.e., private ties, parochial ties). In fact, research supports the importance of community members'

links to external resources for understanding neighborhood crime. For example, Vélez's (2001) study of 60 neighborhoods found that residents' ties to government and police were associated with significantly lower rates of burglary, assault, and mugging victimization. Further these public ties seemed to mediate the effect of private ties on crime, implying that strong private ties might foster the development of public ties. Vélez's analysis also revealed a significant statistical interaction between neighborhood public ties and neighborhood economic disadvantage, whereby the crime-reducing effect of these public ties were strongest in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. A subsequent study by Vélez, Lyons, and Boursaw (2012) examined the effects of access to extra-community economic resources in the form of mortgage lending. Their analysis revealed that neighborhood-level rates of home mortgage loans were negatively related to subsequent violent crime. Similarly, Ramey and Shrider (2014) found that Seattle neighborhoods that acquired external resources in the form of Neighborhood Matching Funds appeared to reduce neighborhood rates of crime. Ethnographic research by Carr (2003, 2012) in the Chicago community of "Beltway" also supports the importance of extra-community linkages. There were a high proportion of dual-earning households in Beltway, making the formation of strong private ties difficult. However, parochial ties in conjunction with public ties were apparent and effective at controlling crime. For example, Carr witnessed a neighborhood problem-solving group work (parochial ties) with local police and politicians (public ties) to close down a nuisance tavern.

Extending Social Disorganization Theory

Theories of crime are not sacred icons to be worshiped at the altar of criminology. No matter how persuasive and elegantly stated, theoretical paradigms should be viewed as provisional understandings of social reality—important in what they allow us to see but not sacrosanct. The challenge is to illuminate how such works might be reconsidered and their explanatory power improved. In this regard, scholars have recently engaged in two lines of inquiry that extend social disorganization theory, including the systemic control model, in noteworthy ways. These two lines of inquiry are collective efficacy theory and legal cynicism theory, each discussed below.

Collective Efficacy Theory

Despite a good deal of empirical support for the systemic control model of social disorganization—from both Sampson and Groves's study and replications (see, e.g., Lowenkamp et al., 2003)—a number of other studies in the 1990s and 2000s showed that friendship and kinship ties are not always related to neighborhood crime in the manner predicted. For example, research has shown that effective crime control emerges in communities with *infrequent* interaction and relatively *weak* interpersonal ties among residents (e.g., Bellair, 1997). Moreover, other research has shown that dense personal ties among residents might actually impede effective social control because "networks connect not just do-gooders but the underbelly of social life, from drug dealers to gang members to crooked politicians" (Sampson, 2012: 151; see also Pattillo, 1998; Venkatesh, 1997). Other work has indicated that dense personal ties among neighbors only work to control crime in certain neighborhoods—such as those that are predominantly white and consist, predominantly, of two-parent households (e.g., Warner and Wilcox Rountree, 1997; Wilcox Rountree and Warner, 1999). Still other work has shown that dense personal ties only work to control particular types of crime involving certain types of offenders (Wilkinson, 2007).

In fact, though he led the development of the systemic control model of social disorganization theory, Robert Sampson has also been at the forefront of synthesizing evidence contrary to the theory and ultimately challenging the systemic model's implicit assumption that low-crime neighborhoods are those with pervasive interpersonal ties connecting residents (e.g., Sampson, 2002). In response, some scholars have drawn

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upon Bursik and Grasmick's broader conceptualization of systemic control, emphasizing that ties to external, public agencies are especially key in effective control of crime (Carr, 2003; Vélez, 2001; Vélez et al., 2012). Other scholars, including Sampson, have embraced *collective efficacy theory* as a related but distinct alternative to the systemic model of social disorganization theory.

In collaboration with Stephen Raudenbush and Felton Earls, Sampson first advanced collective efficacy theory within a study examining rates of violence across 343 Chicago neighborhoods (Sampson et al., 1997; see Chapter 5 in this part; see also Sampson et al., 1999). Their work showed that "concentrated disadvantage"—a combined measure of a community's poverty, race and age composition, and family disruption—is related to neighborhood rates of violence, even controlling for the characteristics of the people surveyed. Importantly, they revealed that the effects of concentrated disadvantage are largely mediated by—that is, occur through—the degree of "collective efficacy" in the neighborhood.

But what is this concept of "collective efficacy"? As envisioned by Sampson and his coauthors, collective efficacy is a concept that includes the willingness of community residents both to exercise informal control (e.g., telling youths to quiet down) and to trust and help one another. In a way, the concept of efficacy seems like the opposite of social disorganization (Taylor, 2001: 128). If so, nothing much would be new theoretically because Sampson et al. would merely be describing the opposite end of the continuum—that is, what an organized community looks like in contrast to a disorganized community. Clearly, there is theoretical overlap between the concepts of "social disorganization" and "collective efficacy," but Sampson and his colleagues are also offering something fresh. Although their ideas are rooted in social disorganization theory, they enrich this perspective in two important ways.

First, whereas Shaw and McKay largely envisioned social organization (as opposed to disorganization) as the presence of *control*, Sampson and colleagues have added a second component: the notion that neighbors *mutually trust or support one another* (Sampson et al., 1999: 635). Trust or social support is important because it provides a basis on which neighbors might expect others to collaborate with them—to stand behind them—when it becomes necessary to exercise social support (see also Cullen, 1994 [Chapter 49]). Indeed, empirically, trust and the willingness to engage in informal control are highly intercorrelated. As Sampson et al. found, in reality, control and trust are coterminous; that is, "you don't get one without the other."

Second, social disorganization is typically portrayed as a "condition"—as a state of being into which a person moves or is born. In this sense, it is a *static* factor, or something that more or less constantly surrounds those in a neighborhood. In contrast, Sampson and his colleagues envision collective efficacy as a *dynamic* factor. It is a resource that can be mobilized when the need arises—such as when teenagers become unruly on a street corner or when drug dealers brazenly establish a "crack house" in the neighborhood.

Collective efficacy thus is not simply being organized and having close social ties, but rather is the "*process* of activating or converting social ties to achieve desired outcomes" (Sampson et al., 1999: 635, emphasis in the original). Communities with weak collective efficacy lack the closeness and trust—sometimes called "social capital"—to mobilize as a group and rid their street of troublemakers and disorder (e.g., by personally confronting people, by forming crime watches, by pressuring politicians and the police to "do something" about the problems they face). In contrast, communities high in collective efficacy can amass a unified front to make life for the wayward in their neighborhood uncomfortable by watching them closely, telling them to go elsewhere, and, if necessary, exerting political pressure and getting the police involved.

Notably, collective efficacy theory has been subjected to a variety of empirical tests, including in Sampson's important 2012 work, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, where he concludes:

> The research on collective efficacy cuts across a number of different studies, investigators, specifications, time periods, outcomes, and more. . . . Overall the results presented here and by others in a growing number of studies around the world suggest that in communities that are otherwise similar in composition, those with higher levels of collective efficacy exhibit lower rates of crime. There is also evidence that collective efficacy is relatively stable over time and that it predicts future variations in crime, adjusting for the aggregate characteristics of individuals and traditional forms of neighborhood networks. (2012: 177–178)

As Sampson suggests, there is mounting evidence that collective efficacy affects neighborhood crime not only in Chicago but also in a variety of other cities and countries, including Sweden (Sampson and Wikström, 2008), Australia (Mazerolle et al., 2010), and China (Jiang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2007). However, the support for collective efficacy theory is not unwavering. For example, Gerben Bruinsma and colleagues (2013) found that collective efficacy was unrelated to offense or offender rates across neighborhoods in The Hague, Netherlands. Further, a Malaysian study by Massomeh Hedayati Marzbali and colleagues (2014) found that higher perceived collective efficacy was actually positively associated with victimization likelihood. Such findings indicate that the applicability of collective efficacy should continue to be assessed in a variety of national contexts (see Bruinsma and Johnson, 2018; Wilcox et al., 2018).

In addition to evidence of collective efficacy's null effects in some national contexts, there is also evidence that its effects can be attenuated by other neighborhood characteristics, including adjacency to areas with low levels of collective efficacy and high levels of crime (Morenoff et al., 2001). Other research indicates that collective efficacy's ability to reduce crime is attenuated in the presence of strong social ties (Browning, 2009; Browning et al., 2004). Browning and colleagues attribute this conditional effect to "negotiated coexistence" between law-abiding and criminal residents: In contexts where the personal networks of law-abiding and law-violating citizens are intertwined, strong ties might actually provide social capital for the law violators, thereby compromising the expected benefit of collective efficacy (see also Pattillo, 1998; Venkatesh, 1997). Thus, the findings of Browning and colleagues imply that shared norms about control may not always translate into actual engagement in informal social control. In fact, a study of Australian neighborhoods by Wickes et al. (2017) examined the effect of neighborhood collective efficacy on residents' actual engagement in informal social control when faced with significant neighborhood problems, and their findings revealed that collective efficacy was unrelated to directly intervening in problems or calling police or other government agencies (see also Warner, 2007).

Despite some questions about the extent to which collective efficacy theory is generalizable across all contexts, collective efficacy has become the central organizing concept within the Chicago school tradition in the 21st century. Collective efficacy theory is thus having a defining influence on the study of communities and crime, and it should continue to do so well into the foreseeable future. Still, other important developments in community crime theory continue to emerge—including legal cynicism theory, discussed below.

Legal Cynicism and Community Crime

A contemporary line of inquiry explores how community *culture* in the form of *legal cynicism* influences neighborhood violence. Sampson and Bartusch (1998: 782) first introduced the concept of legal cynicism and claimed that it was a an ecologically structured normative orientation akin to "anomie about law," whereby "the rules of the dominant society (and hence the legal system) are no longer binding in a community." They presented legal cynicism as a property of a collective, independent of individual values regarding illegal behavior. Their analysis indicated

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Kirk and Papachristos (2011) further developed the concept of legal cynicism (see Chapter 6 in this part). They suggest that legal cynicism is a cultural frame "through which individuals interpret the functioning and viability of the law and its agents" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1197). From the frame of legal cynicism, the police are viewed as illegitimate, nonresponsive to residents' needs and calls for assistance, and unable to adequately provide safety. Like Sampson and Bartusch (1998), Kirk and Papachristos (2011) treat legal cynicism as a characteristic of communities. Although 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* that emerges from social interaction (for a discussion of individual experiences with legal agents, see Chapter 35 on procedural justice theory).

Legal cynicism is said to emerge from two interrelated neighborhood conditions: (1) concentrated disadvantage, and (2) previous police–resident encounters. Concentrated disadvantage often leads to legal cynicism because it breeds a general sense of alienation from society—a feeling that "the dominant societal institutions (of which the police and the justice system are emblematic) will offer little in the way of security, either economic or personal" (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011: 1198). Previous police–resident encounters, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, often lead to legal cynicism because there is evidence that police are less likely to file incident reports when called and more likely to harass and use force (or threats thereof) against suspects in such neighborhoods. Furthermore, information and experiences with the criminal justice system is exchanged among residents, creating collective cynicism that is independent of individual values and experiences (see also Kirk and Matsuda, 2011). Legal cynicism has consequences for neighborhood rates of violence in that it serves to constrain perceived courses of action for resolving disputes. Specifically, since police are viewed with cynicism, they are not relied upon to handle grievances. Instead, residents take matters into their own hands, which often involves use of violence. Importantly, Kirk and Papachristos stress that such violence does not reflect pro-violence values on the part of the individual residents. Rather, it reflects culturally defined appropriate action in a context in which reliance upon police is considered unhelpful. Thus, many individuals who do not personally condone violence still might resort to violence in a community with a pervasive cultural frame of legal cynicism.

Kirk and Papachristos (2011) find support for the posited causes and consequences of legal cynicism in an analysis of homicide across 343 Chicago neighborhoods. Results showed that concentrated disadvantage was positively associated with legal cynicism; and that legal cynicism, in turn, was positively related to neighborhood violence. The effect of legal cynicism on violence was observed above and beyond the significant effect of collective efficacy, suggesting that legal cynicism is an additional important concept for understanding community crime. At the same time, Kirk and Papachristos's (2011) analysis implies that legal cynicism, in part, works in conjunction with collective efficacy. Specifically, they found that legal cynicism weakened collective efficacy, thereby indirectly increasing violence.

In conclusion, collective efficacy theory and legal cynicism theory, while distinct from Shaw and McKay's original social disorganization theory, are best seen as reinforcing Shaw and McKay's ideas. That is, strong communities can act to quell disorder, while communities weakened by structural and cultural problems will be fertile soil for the growth of crime. This general theoretical orientation reminds us that individuals are not islands free from outside influences, but rather are enmeshed in a web of social relations that increase or decrease one's power to