

# INCARCERATION, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND CRIME: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY\*

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*This study is a theoretical exploration of the impact of public social control on the functioning of local social controls. Set within the framework of social disorganization and systemic theory, the study argues that an overreliance on incarceration as a formal control may hinder the ability of some communities to foster other forms of control because they weaken family and community structures. At the ecological level, the side effects of policies intended to fight crime by controlling individual behavior may exacerbate the problems they are intended to address. Thus, these communities may experience more, not less, social disorganization.*

It is commonly accepted that in the absence of effective controls, crime and disorder flourish. Controls can operate at the individual, family, neighborhood, and state levels; and the safest neighborhoods are thought to be those in which controls work at each of these levels. This study is a theoretical exploration of the impact of state social control on the functioning of family and neighborhood social controls. We argue that state social controls, which typically are directed at individual behavior, have important secondary effects on family and neighborhood structures. These, in turn, impede the neighborhood's capacity for social control. Thus, at the ecological level, the side effects of policies intended to fight crime by controlling individual criminals may exacerbate problems that lead to crime in the first place.

We recognize that to some readers our argument is entirely plausible, perhaps even obvious. "After all," they might say, "everyone knows that current socioeconomic policy produces structural damages to the poor, creating a permanent underclass." Yet other readers will find our argument curious or even counterintuitive. How can it be bad for neighborhood life to remove people who are committing crimes in those very neighborhoods? We discuss a topic on which today's informed observers

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hold opposing views and on which there is little direct empirical evidence. We argue that a substantial body of indirect evidence exists on the expected social impacts of high incarceration rates, and that this evidence is well established within ecological frameworks of neighborhood life. To develop this theoretical line of reasoning, we move from the individualist paradigm that dominates contemporary thought about crime and crime policy, as exemplified by "criminal careers" and "criminal incapacitation" (see Blumstein et al., 1986; and Zimring and Hawkins, 1995) to a more inclusive ecological model of crime, crime control, and neighborhood life.

Ecological theories of crime seek to explain spatial variations in urban crime rates by exploring differences in the capacity for control across areas. Social disorganization theory, for example, attributes crime and disorder to impaired local controls at the neighborhood level. As a result, some communities are unable to self-regulate. In their study of neighborhood-level control, social disorganization theorists have largely ignored the impact of public, or state control, on processes of neighborhood organization and subsequent opportunities for crime. This is because formal public controls are thought of as responses to crime. Yet, there is clearly a relationship between the use of local and public controls. When local controls are impaired, communities must rely more heavily upon the controls of the state. Partly this is because there is more crime in these areas so the communities need the added strength of formal law enforcement in their response to crime. However, it may be that increased state efforts shift control resources from local to public, thus making state efforts more necessary. For instance, in high-crime neighborhoods, a concentration of police efforts removes large numbers of residents from the neighborhood. It is assumed that measures taken by the state, such as arresting and imprisoning offenders, will make communities safer by removing dangerous residents and by enabling those remaining to shore up their local controls. This may not always be the case. Rather, these practices may undermine the kinds of networks that form the basis of local control. Inherent in our analysis is the view that offenders have complex relationships to the networks in which they are embedded. They may contribute both positively and negatively toward family and neighborhood life. Their removal in large numbers alters those networks both positively and negatively. In highly organized communities, where levels of crime are low, action by the criminal justice system may enhance neighborhood networks overall by fostering ties between residents who now feel safer. In highly disorganized areas, however, action by the criminal justice system may damage neighborhood structure by disrupting network ties of offenders and nonoffenders and fostering alienation among residents and between the neighborhood and the state. In the latter case, the impact on local

social control of the removal of residents is similar in nature (though different in kind) to Wilson's (1987) observation that communities experience a loss of control due to the out-migration of middle-class families. In this study we explore the hypothesis that an overreliance on formal controls may hinder the ability of some communities to foster other forms of control. As a result, these communities may experience more, not less, social disorganization.

### SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY, SOCIAL CONTROL AND CRIME

In the search to explain spatial variation in crime rates, social disorganization theorists have explored the structural characteristics associated with crime. Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization theory, and more recently work done by Bursik (1986, 1988), Sampson (1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1987), and others, focuses on group adaptations to social processes such as urbanization and shifting patterns of economic growth, rather than concentrating on individual criminality. The essence of this theory is that some communities are unable to effectively self-regulate due to the damaging effects of certain environmental characteristics. This condition leads to a disrupted neighborhood organizational structure, which subsequently attenuates residents' ties to each other and to the community. As a result, some residents no longer submit to normative social controls.

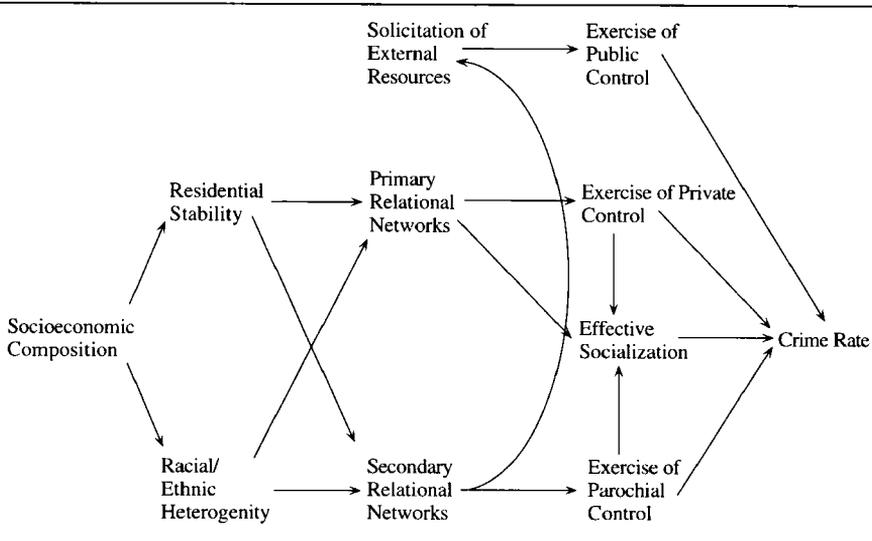
Disorganized communities are unable to realize the common values of their residents and are unable to solve commonly experienced problems (Kornhauser, 1978) because they cannot establish or maintain consensus concerning values, norms, roles, or hierarchical arrangements among their members (Kornhauser, 1978; Shaw and McKay, 1942). As a control theory, social disorganization theory assumes that one common goal residents in all neighborhoods share is the desire to live in an area that is safe to inhabit (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:15). We assume all residents desire this since even offenders do not wish to be victimized.

Researchers working within this theoretical domain have focused their efforts on identifying which ecological conditions are most associated with crime. Attention has commonly been centered on such variables as poverty, residential mobility, ethnic heterogeneity, population, and structural density. The state of disorganization remains latent, only to be inferred by the existence of these destabilizing factors.

Recently, attempts have been made to explore the "black box" of disorganization. Sampson (1987) and Sampson and Groves (1989) have investigated the mediating effects of guardianship, community attachment, and informal social control. They have shown that integration and social ties are important mediators between social conditions and crime. For

instance, Sampson (1988) finds that integration is indicated by individuals' local friendships, their attachment to the community and their participation in local activities. Integration fosters participation, which fosters deeper integration. Whereas these scholars focus their efforts on identifying *dimensions* of control, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) have identified different *levels* of control. They merge systemic and social disorganization theories to examine the mediating role of private, parochial, and public controls. Bursik and Grasmick's extension of disorganization theory shows how ecological factors influence different levels of control. Social control, they argue, represents an effort by neighborhood residents to regulate the behavior of both locals and outsiders to achieve the goal of a safe living environment. Figure 1 shows their "Basic Systemic Model of Crime." This is a model of the structure of social resources that produce crime. It is composed of three panels of theoretical effects. The first panel is derived from the work of Shaw and McKay (1942) and contains the traditional social disorganization constructs: socioeconomic composition, residential stability, and racial/ethnic heterogeneity. The second panel comprises external resources and primary and secondary relational networks. It is an amalgam of the human/social capital construct derived from Wilson's work (1987, 1996). This panel represents the interplay between local familial and voluntary groups and forces external to the neighborhood that may affect neighborhood life. The final panel, drawn

Figure 1. Bursik and Grasmick's Basic Systemic Model of Crime



From Bursik and Grasmick (1993).

from Hunter's work (1985), is a classification of the levels of social control by which communities carry out self-regulation.

Private control occurs among intimates and primary groups, such as family members or very close friends. Control stems from the allocation or threatened withdrawal of sentiment, social support, and mutual esteem. Parochial controls are the kinds of supervision and surveillance of places that occur naturally within communities, as people interact in normal day-to-day routines (see Felson, 1996). They encompass the broader, local, interpersonal networks, including the relationship among local institutions, such as stores, schools, and churches. For instance, Sampson et al. (1997) identified several examples of informal community control tactics, such as willingness to intervene to prevent truancy or street-corner loitering by teenagers or confrontation of individuals who are damaging public property or disturbing the neighborhood. Control is located in the effectiveness of these groups and in the capacity of neighbors to supervise each other. Public controls involve the networks developed between the neighborhood and outside agencies, including those operated by the criminal justice and other governmental systems. Control is a function of the ability of the neighborhood to secure public goods and services from sources outside the neighborhood (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:16–17).

These efforts by Sampson (1987), Sampson and Groves (1989), and Bursik and Grasmick (1993) highlight the significance of networks in neighborhood control. Sampson and Groves primarily focus their efforts on components of the primary and parochial levels. They recognize that the extent to which individual residents are integrated and tied to the neighborhood influences its capacity to self-regulate. Conversely, when residents' ties are attenuated, when they feel anonymous and isolated, local control is difficult to achieve. Social control becomes compromised because there is a lack of community interaction and shared obligation. As a result, the community is weakened and can no longer intervene on behalf of the neighborhood (Sampson, 1987). Bursik and Grasmick add to this the idea that public control plays a role in neighborhood regulation to the extent that relations between the community and the state determine the type and quality of services and resources provided. We would add that networks between these actors influence the community's receptivity to coercive controls and determine whether the two engage in a largely cooperative or adversarial relationship.

While it is tempting to think about these as three distinct levels of control, they are implicitly linked because they are interdependent. For instance, parochial controls are far more effective when they exist within environments with strong private controls. As a form of control, the Parent-Teachers' Association's (PTA) functioning in the neighborhood will have more impact on a child's behavior when parents of various children

know and interact with each other, because information shared at the parochial level reinforces interactions at the private level. However, when parents do not attend PTA meetings, this organization ceases to serve as a mechanism for parochial control.

By contrast, public controls can operate in the neighborhood without regard for private and parochial controls, although often not as well. For instance, the police can do their jobs regardless of the state of the local PTA. Further, police can make the streets safe so residents can attend the local PTA meeting. They cannot, however, make residents want to attend that meeting. Only well-functioning private controls can manage that.

Black (1976) was one of the first to suggest a relationship between formal and informal controls as part of his larger theory about the quantity and style of law. His work recognizes the distinction between governmental and nongovernmental control and proposes the importance of both for effective regulation. He argued, as we do, that as informal social controls deteriorate, formal controls increase. We note that empirical results have provided only mixed support for Black's hypothesis. Lessan and Sheley (1992) recently attributed this to the fact that most studies (Braithwaite and Biles, 1980; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Kruttschnitt, 1980-81; Massey and Myers, 1989; Myers, 1980; Smith, 1987) have been conducted at the microsociological level. Their macrosociological level study, however, fared little better.

The lack of support found for the link between informal and formal controls might be attributed to the way in which control is conceptualized. Black considered informal control to be primarily familial and intimate. Lessan and Sheley (1992) use homicide and suicide rates as an indicator of the loss of community nongovernmental control over its members because they assumed these acts occur in the context of familial and intimate violence. This operationalization only vaguely connects to the broader ideas of informal social control, and it omits the role of parochial controls, which we view as essential. The interplay among all three types of control is important for effective community self-regulation, and a simple, recursively linear model is insufficient to test these relationships.

An overreliance on public controls may diminish the capacity of private and parochial controls as communities learn to rely on outsiders. While it is assumed that neighbors who call the police to control excessive noise have summoned public controls to shore up private and parochial controls, they actually may have replaced parochial with public control. Perhaps more significantly, policies and practices of public control agencies can directly attack the functioning of lower levels of control by disrupting the networks of association and the resources on which private and parochial controls rely. For instance, in 1996, President Clinton announced that the federal government would be funding community-based policing, through

neighborhood crime watches and foot patrols, as part of community revitalization efforts. Although these programs are community based, they are often thinly veiled, "top-down" policy models in which the formal social control agencies assign duties and sanctions for the neighborhood group to impose on its members. When the focus of community policing derives from the biases of the formal control agency, tensions among residents of the neighborhood escalate, as does the hostility between the community and the police (Goetz, 1996). This is particularly true in disorganized communities, where the relationships among the levels of control are fragile.

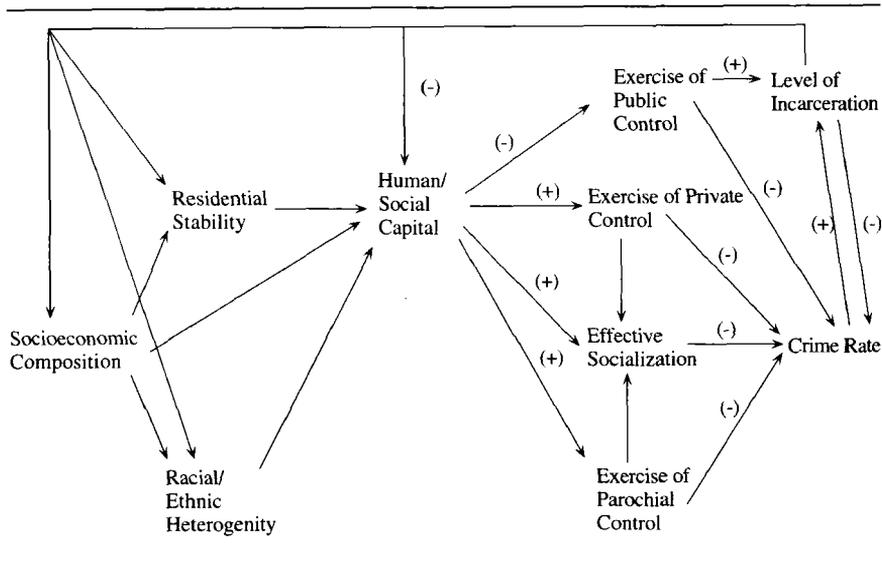
### THE NONRECURSIVE MODEL

In its current form, the Bursik and Grasmick model is recursive, suggesting the traditional form of the crime control relationship: Communities that experience less social disorganization experience less crime. Our argument is that the public controls (the third panel) feed back upon most of the elements of the Basic Systemic Model. Thus, we argue for a reciprocal model in which public control influences the exogenous variables in the model. Figure 2 is a revision of Bursik and Grasmick's Basic Systemic Model illustrating our idea. It incorporates a feedback loop into a theory of the impact of crime control on neighborhood structures and its subsequent impact on self-regulation. It also subsumes primary and secondary relational networks and the solicitation of external resources under the heading "human and social capital." We return to this point below.

Our model specifies a reciprocal relationship between public social control and human and social capital and between public social control and the endogenous variables socioeconomic status, residential stability, and racial/ethnic heterogeneity through levels of incarceration. Bursik and Grasmick make the argument that residential mobility and racial/ethnic heterogeneity affect the relational networks that are the basis of control because both conditions make it difficult for residents to establish and maintain ties within the neighborhood. Further, both decrease the ability and willingness of individuals to intervene in criminal events on behalf of their neighbors due to individual anonymity and alienation and, possibly, due to hostility or mistrust between different groups. In addition, mobility and heterogeneity potentially impair the socialization of youths, who are presumably exposed to multiple standards and forms of behavior rather than to one, unified code (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:35-36).

Traditionally, Shaw and McKay (1942) believed that the key factor influencing residential mobility and ethnic heterogeneity was the socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood. Shaw and McKay believed poor neighborhoods were multiethnic and transient because they were the first stopping ground of new immigrants, who tended to move on when they

Figure 2. A Nonrecursive Model of Crime Control, Social Disorder, and Crime



Adapted from Bursik and Grasmick (1993).

were financially able. Today, although contemporary researchers tend to model all three variables as equally exogenous, they continue to subscribe to the idea that disorganized communities are ethnically heterogeneous and residentially mobile because they are poor. Current work on the urban underclass, poverty, and residential segregation questions the chances of upward mobility for certain segments of the population (Anderson, 1990; Massey, 1990; Wilson, 1987). Thus, economic opportunities may not be driving residential mobility trends in some of today's poorer neighborhoods. Rather, other forces may be at work, forces producing entrenched deficits in social capital.

Our modification of Bursik and Grasmick's Basic Systemic Model is aligned with recent attempts by researchers to move beyond simple recursive models of crime to incorporate the nonrecursive or systemic features of the phenomenon. For the most part, work on nonrecursive models has dealt with the causes and effects of crime. For instance, Cook (1986:6-19) describes a "feedback loop" in which individuals limit their exposure to potential victimization as a result of their assessment of the likelihood of their being victimized, and in so doing, reduce the number of criminal opportunities. This takes the form of a market in which the volume of crime is partly determined by an interaction between potential victims

who adapt their self-protection efforts based upon the probability of victimization and potential criminals who adapt their rate of offending based upon the overall quality of criminal opportunities. Skogan (1986, 1990) argues that levels of crime increase fear, which results in psychological and physical withdrawal from the neighborhood. This in turn weakens informal control, damages the organizational life and mobilization capacity of the neighborhood, and deteriorates business conditions. Wilson (1996) has argued that these forces also lead to the economic abandonment of inner cities, which produces further deterioration. These changes result in more crime and lead to a change in the composition of the population.

Within the social disorganization tradition, researchers have begun to examine the reciprocal relationship between community structure and crime rates with the understanding that social disorganization produces crime, which then produces more disorganization. Sampson et al. (1997) found that in very disadvantaged neighborhoods, decreases in collective efficacy (informal social controls and social cohesion within a neighborhood) result in a significant decrease in residential stability, which in turn increases the poverty of those neighborhoods. The so-called "broken windows" thesis (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), for example, is that the visible existence of minor criminal events conditions beliefs about more basic public safety and softens potential offenders' self-controls against criminal conduct. Likewise, Rose's (1995) analysis of crime and neighborhood organization in Chicago identified a reciprocal model in which neighborhood organizations affect opportunities for crime, the existence of which influences the need for renewed organizational efforts, which in turn alters subsequent opportunities for crime. Gottfredson and Taylor (1988) have shown that neighborhood characteristics affect individual arrest probabilities of prison releasees, even after their personal characteristics are controlled. The import of this line of inquiry is that crime trends are not independently linear, but must be understood contextually within local communities, especially with regard to other forms of self-regulation (see Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). In this vein, a recent paper by Taylor (1997) shows how the parochial controls described by Bursik and Grasmick are mediated by street-block characteristics.

Bursik and Grasmick (1993:57-59) note that their systemic model may be incomplete because of a failure to incorporate the degree to which crime and delinquency affect a neighborhood's capacity for social control. We add that it may be incomplete because of its failure to incorporate the feedback effect of the key systemic feature of public social controls.

The nonrecursive nature of the relationship between crime and community suggests that a simple recursive model of removing offenders to improve neighborhood life fails to consider the feedback effect of public social control on the system of communities and crime. To the degree the

feedback effects weaken community structure, there would then be unintended consequences of crime control strategies that damage neighborhood self-regulation.

We argue that one of those forces is incarceration, for it affects the three disorganizing factors originally identified by Shaw and McKay (1942). First, incarceration alters the socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood by influencing vital local resources, such as labor and marriage markets. (We consider these and other impacts of incarceration in more detail below.) Second, in many areas penal practices are a key factor influencing mobility in and out of the neighborhood. Every entrant into prison is someone exiting a neighborhood; every release from prison returns someone to a neighborhood. Finally, incarceration influences heterogeneity. Shaw and McKay, and others since them, have examined the impact of racial and ethnic heterogeneity on social organization because of the assumption that different ethnic groups represent different norms and values. Today, in many poor communities, there is racial homogeneity (these areas often are primarily black) but a heterogeneity of norms and values still exists (see Anderson, 1990, for a review of this argument). Not only do incarceration trends open opportunities for entrance of newcomers (with potentially different norms and values) into the neighborhood, but they increase opportunities for individuals to be socialized into prison subcultures. One might think that the removal of offenders would increase the cultural homogeneity of the neighborhoods they leave behind. However, well over 90% of prison admissions are eventually released after an average prison stay of about two years (Clear and Cole, 1997). Upon their return to the community, the stronger deviant orientation of prison releaseses increases local cultural heterogeneity, thereby increasing disorganization.

#### THE RECIPROCAL EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION

Since 1973, the incarceration rate has grown from about 90 per 100,000 to over 400 per 100,000; prisoners have increased from 350,000 to more than 1.5 million. Though the accumulation of additional prisoners has been gradual, the net impact of this profound shift in the collective experience of incarceration is important to understand. Growth in imprisonment has disproportionately affected the poor and people of color. When controlling for age and social class, it has been estimated that a minimum of 10% of *underclass* African-American males aged 26 to 30 were incarcerated in 1986 (Lynch and Sabol, 1992)—a number that has certainly grown with the prison population's growth (about double) since that time. In 1992 alone, 1 in 27 African-American males aged 16 to 34, living in metropolitan areas and contiguous counties, was admitted to prison

(Lynch and Sabol, 1997). In 1994, approximately 9% of *all* African-Americans were under some form of correctional supervision (incarcerated or on probation or parole) (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996). Approximately 7% of all African-American males aged 20 to 50 are currently in prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995). Overall, the lifetime probability of an African-American male going to state or federal prison is 29% (Bonczar and Beck, 1997). The residential segregation of African-Americans in urban communities means that some of their neighborhoods have suffered war-level casualties in parenting-age males during the increase in imprisonment since 1973, when far fewer African-American males were incarcerated.

Our view builds on Wilson (1987), who argues that the out-migration of the middle class has resulted in neighborhoods without sufficient economic and social foundations for effective social control. These communities, he argues, are characterized by “joblessness, lawlessness, low-achieving schools” and increasing social isolation from mainstream society (Wilson 1987:58). Further, it is the impact of joblessness on social isolation that is crucial to understanding the underclass. Without a financially stable middle class (and no way to create a new one), these communities have neither the residents who socialize their youngsters to conventional norms and values, nor the ability to sustain local institutions.

The goal of Wilson’s analysis was to account for the growth of severe poverty, and he begins by examining the events that disrupt a fully functioning community. Our analysis begins where he left off; it examines events that disrupt low-functioning neighborhoods. Communities hardest hit by incarceration are already depleted and each resource is vital. Compared to healthy neighborhoods, ones with sufficient supplies of human and social capital, disorganized areas most likely suffer exponentially with each additional network disruption. We expect, then, the same type of effect on communities from the out-migration of residents (even those who offend) as did Wilson, but with greater magnitude because of the fragile nature of the neighborhood.

A great deal depends, of course, on whether the active offender is viewed as a neighborhood asset or a liability. It is logical to assume that the loss of criminal males benefits communities simply because they are residents who are committing crimes. Their removal, then, could be seen as a positive act by the state: Criminals are gone, communities are safer and informal controls are now free to blossom. But if offenders are not *solely* a drain—if they are resources to some members of the community and if they occupy roles within networks that form the basis for informal social control—their removal is not solely a positive act, but also imposes losses on those networks and their capacity for strengthened community life.

Research shows offenders represent both assets and liabilities to their communities. A good example is provided by the conflicting perspectives that emerge from street ethnographies of criminal behavior. Some studies paint a dim picture, such as Fleisher's (1995) description of the lives of a sample of serious offenders who passed through Lompoc Prison, California, while he was an administrator there. He describes men who are disconnected from legitimate society and whose personal relationships are characterized by cycles of violence, complete amorality of conduct, and irremedial bouts of alcoholism and drug addiction. His conclusion is that only a policy of lengthy imprisonment makes sense for these men. Yet, this pessimistic view must be contrasted to studies of inner-city youth gangs that document the violent criminal lifestyle of gang members even while they show the connections of these young men to children, families, and others in their neighborhoods. In one study, a majority of active gang members were fathers, and a minority were employed in legitimate jobs though most worked sporadically (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). Though the gang isolates the young man from pro-social elements of community life, those connections are still seen as valuable by gang members and their families alike, partly due to the mutually supportive relations gang members have with others in their community (e.g., see Venkatesh, 1997).

Portraits drawn by the ethnographers cannot be simply summarized. Clearly, some offenders offer little or nothing of value to their neighborhoods and much that is damaging to them. However, there are just as clearly offenders who occupy positions in socialization and social control networks of their own, and whose removal to prison disrupts those networks. In addition, as the growth in imprisonment in recent years is increasingly a result of the incarceration of drug offenders rather than violent offenders (Irwin and Austin, 1996), the removal of potential assets may be increasing. That is, these men may be offenders who leave their communities for prison and take with them the support they have been providing to networks that sustain private and parochial controls in those neighborhoods.

Fishman's (1990) study of the partners of incarcerated men is a portrait of the complexities of offenders' contributions to their families and associates. Many of the women in her study exhibit a strong commitment to their male partners and put enormous effort into maintaining intimate ties across prison walls. Some women's lives seem to improve with the man's removal, others clearly deteriorate. While the women display admirable fortitude when confronted with the loss of their partners, for almost all of them this represents a challenge to their resources and a profound interruption in their lives. Nor is the removal of criminal parents uniformly positive for their children. Lowenstein's (1986) research on the children of

incarcerated men finds evidence of significant psychological stress and acting out among some children following their fathers' incarceration, while others exhibited fewer symptoms of stress. MaCoun and Reuter's (1991) study of street-level drug dealers finds that these offenders had both legitimate and illegitimate sources of income in order to meet daily living expenses. Sullivan's (1989) ethnography of young offenders finds the same complex pattern of economic involvement in crime and legitimate enterprise, and it shows that these young men contribute to the financial welfare of families and others in their neighborhoods. Maher's (1991) ethnography of crack-using mothers shows that even within this group of impaired crack addicts there are many who make a great effort to provide parenting to their children.

These studies confirm that some active offenders whose crimes make them eligible for incarceration are financial assets to their families and their communities. They contribute directly to the welfare of their families and other intimates in the same way noncriminal males do, although perhaps they provide fewer total dollars. This contribution helps explain why a study conducted a generation ago (Clear et al., 1971) found that over half of a sample comprised of one month's admissions to the Indiana Department of Corrections reported that their families went onto public assistance immediately following their imprisonment. Other street ethnographies show how young male offenders often live within tight associational networks of families and children, and they act as resources to those networks (e.g., McCall, 1994; Shakur, 1993). Recent research on gangs (Jankowski, 1991; Venkatesh, 1997) shows gang members in multidimensional roles—some detrimental and some beneficial to the neighborhood.

Our point is not that offenders be romanticized as "good citizens," but rather that they not be demonized. A view of them as "merely bad" is a one-sided stereotype that not only ignores the assets they represent to the networks within which they live, but also fails to account for the benefits they contribute to their environments. It also fails to recognize the damage done to other relational networks when they are incarcerated, networks often consisting of nonoffending family members, relatives, and friends. One reason disorganized communities are disorganized is because they do not have the strong bonds and dense social relationships that are important to social control (Kornhauser, 1978:45). This makes the fragile linkages in those areas even more important. To say that offenders contribute to their communities is not to say they are ideal relatives and neighbors. It does recognize, however, their contribution exists, and in disorganized areas with low levels of control partly due to weak ties, the contribution of offenders may not be that much less than their nonoffending neighbors.

Socially organized areas have sufficient assets and resources to overcome the loss of an offender's asset in order to remove the offender's liability from the neighborhood. In socially disorganized areas, however, assets are already sufficiently depleted that the neighborhood feels the loss of the asset just as it rejoices in the loss of the liability. Further, bouts of incarceration tend to produce individuals more hostile to legal legitimacy, less willing to work, and less able to get a job—conditions that increase that individual's role as a liability and diminish him as an asset. Add to this mix potentially hostile and antagonistic relations with the police and the state and incarceration trends may serve to exacerbate a neighborhood's social isolation. The question is, To what degree is this true? To respond to this question, we first consider the role of social and human capital in building informal social control.

### SOCIAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

Social disorganization theory is implicitly based upon the notions of social and human capital, even if the terms have not been explicitly adopted. *Social capital* refers to the social skills and resources needed to effect positive change in neighborhood life. It is the aspect of structured groups that increases the capacity for action oriented toward the achievement of group goals (Hagan, 1994). Goals are accomplished by transforming resources gathered in one forum, for one purpose, into resources for another forum and for another purpose (Coleman, 1988). The essence of social disorganization theory is that disruptions of both formal and informal processes of social control impede a neighborhood's ability to self-regulate (Bursik, 1988). Social capital is the essence of social control for it is the very force collectives draw upon to enforce order. It is what enables groups to enforce norms and, as a result, to increase their level of informal control. Disorganized communities, then, suffer from crime and other negative conditions partly because they have insufficient supplies of social capital.

In Bursik and Grasmick's Basic Systemic Model, the solicitation of external resources and both primary and secondary relational networks (the three factors directly influencing the three levels of control) are elements of social capital. We discuss them in terms of this broader category in order to emphasize the idea that socially organized communities need integrated networks at many different levels for effective self-regulation. In socially organized areas resources accumulated at one level can become resources for control at another level. This does not occur so readily in socially disorganized areas.

Social capital works by facilitating certain actions and constraining

others. It stems from a sense of trust and obligation created through interaction among community members and serves to reinforce a set of prescriptive norms. Thus, social capital effectively unites individuals within a neighborhood, thereby initiating and enhancing a sense of collectivity (Coleman, 1988). High levels of social capital augment the ability and efficacy of the community to sanction transgressors. In communities with large supplies of social capital, for example, adolescents are encouraged to complete their education, discouraged from stealing cars, and sanctioned appropriately in informal and intimate relationships. Sampson and Laub (1993) recently concluded that social investment (or social capital) in institutional relationships dictates the salience of informal social control at the individual level. More important, they found that trajectories of crime and deviance can be modified by these bonds. It follows that communities rich in social capital also will experience relatively low levels of disorganization and low levels of crime. It has been shown, for instance, that immigrant groups rich in human and social capital are more able to promote self-employment than their more capital-poor counterparts (Sanders and Nee, 1996). This, then, insulates the neighborhood from the link between unemployment and crime.

Social capital relies upon (and in turn promotes) human capital. *Human capital* refers to the human skill and resources individuals need to function effectively, such as reading, writing, and reasoning ability. It is the capital individuals acquire through education and training for productive purposes (Hagan, 1994). In a sense, social capital contextualizes human capital (and vice versa) because neighborhoods rich in social capital exert more control over individual residents, thus helping to produce more highly educated, employable, and productive members of the community. Neighborhoods deficient in social capital are areas conducive to crime because they are characterized by many individuals who are undereducated, unemployed, and more likely to be criminal. Thus, communities rich in social capital also are communities rich in human capital. Conversely, those without one, tend also to be without the other. Recent research provides evidence to support these relationships. For instance, disrupted network ties (the basis for social capital), which limit access to noncash resources, have been shown to be a primary determinant of whether women are working or are on welfare (Edin and Lein, 1997). Farkas et al. (1997) recently found that differences in cognitive skills (human capital) explain a large part of the pay differences between ethnic groups. They conclude that these differences arise largely from social sources such as school, family, and neighborhood experiences, all of which are key components of social capital.

What this amounts to is that where people live greatly affects their lives. By providing an environment either rich or deficient in resources, place of

residence affects tangibly the quality of day-to-day life (Sullivan, 1989). Place of residence also influences the range of opportunities people find available because area affects the quality and extent of their personal networks. Environments rich in human capital promote the development of social capital (and vice versa), and these are the areas in which residents, both individually and collectively, are able to solve problems.

Neighborhoods are the focal point for satisfying daily needs through informal support networks. For instance, place of residence is an important source of informal networks of people who provide important products and services (such as child care) and alter life chances with job referrals and political connections (or, of course, criminal contacts). While this informal marketplace sometimes operates through monetary exchange, more often it operates through barter, where reciprocity is the currency of exchange (Logan and Molotch, 1987). This system is especially important for the poor, who rely more upon each other for these types of resources because they tend to be less spatially liberated than the well-to-do (Wellman, 1979). As a result, poor people draw upon this network more frequently than people in affluent areas, and poor people are particularly damaged when their interpersonal networks are disrupted. This type of endogenous exchange further becomes irrelevant if it does not carry with it the external connection to economic and political structures that foster community (Logan and Molotch, 1987). In the aggregate, the impact of social disruptions on the neighborhood can be devastating.

Not much is known about the networks so fundamental to social capital and social control. On the individual level, research has explored the impact of network disruption on the quality of life. For instance, Kessler and McLeod (1984) and Conger et al. (1993) show that women suffer psychological distress from "network" events, life events that do not occur to them but to members of their networks, and that men are more distressed by work and financial events. Within criminology, not much work has focused on the nature of networks and their impact on residents and communities, other than to assume enhanced networks lead to increases in social control. Variables measuring integration and social ties have been included in social disorganization analyses (Sampson and Groves, 1989) with an eye to determining their importance in preventing crime. In this study, we ask the opposite question: How much disruption can networks sustain before they fail to function?

Events that disrupt the relational networks and systems so fundamental to the development and maintenance of social capital reduce the neighborhood's ability to self-regulate. Within social disorganization, studies including integration and network ties have used continuous variables because social disorganization is thought to be linear. Most research on networks also assumes that networks affect individuals in a linear fashion.

This work analyzes changes resulting from incremental additions to the network. With one exception, the question of thresholds has not been addressed. Berkman and Syme (1979) show that an individual with only one person in the network has roughly the same mortality rate as someone with 20. Thus, there is a threshold effect between zero and one. We extrapolate from this that other networks probably operate similarly and that at the community level a minimum number of healthy networks is needed for the neighborhood to function effectively. When a sufficient number of individual networks is disrupted, the community is disrupted too. We do not speculate on what that number is, though it can be answered empirically. There may even be a tipping point; that is, a small number of offenders may be removed with little ill effect because remaining networks are minimally affected. But after some point of removing males, the remaining networks have taken sufficient hits that their capacity to function in ordinary social controls is severely dampened. Indeed, this threshold may be lower in the most disorganized communities, where networks may be thin to begin with and thus more vulnerable to disruption. In other words, social capital contextualizes the impact of network disruption through incarceration. Not only do disorganized communities have more networks disrupted through incarceration, the impact may be stronger in these neighborhoods because they have a lower threshold due to depleted supplies of social capital.

#### LEGITIMATE SYSTEMS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORDER

The potential for unintended consequences of imprisonment is made plain by a "systems" model in which criminals are seen as embedded in various interpersonal, family, economic, and political systems. While there are many networks and systems at work in the community, our point is best illustrated by exploring three important legitimate systems of neighborhood order: family, economic, and political. Familial systems are the most important source of private social controls. Economic and political systems set the context within which parochial social controls flourish or wane. We investigate these systems as direct ways in which incarceration affects a neighborhood's capacity for informal social control. In addition, we also propose ways in which incarceration influences illegitimate systems within the community.

We have listed ways in which the unintended consequences of incarceration might be expected to affect these systems within the neighborhood infrastructure. While one or another of these factors by itself may seem trivial in its relationship to crime, their combined effects may potentially be devastating. The purpose of this review is not to build a fully developed theory of such relationships. Rather, it is to begin building this theory by showing how disrupting a large number of networked systems

through incarcerating consequential portions of a neighborhood's population can promote, rather than reduce, crime.

#### FAMILIAL SYSTEMS

Communities that contribute higher rates of members to incarceration experience higher rates of family disruption, single-parent families, and births to young, single adults (Lynch and Sabol, 1992). The close association between these factors and the removal of high rates of young males from these underclass, racial-minority communities suggests a plausible hypothesis that one is, in part, a product of another (or at least that they are mutually reinforcing phenomena). What are the implications of this pattern?

It is well established that children suffer when parents are removed from the home. What is less clear is the nature and extent of disruption that follows an incarceration. Studies of this problem have tended to focus on mothers (Gabel, 1992), but there have also been a few attempts to document the impacts of imprisonment of fathers (Brodsky, 1975; Carlson and Cervera, 1992; Fishman, 1990; King, 1993; Lowenstein, 1986). The studies show that the negative psychological and circumstantial impact on children from the removal of a parent for incarceration is similar in form though not in degree to that produced by removal due to divorce or death. Further, Hagan (1996) shows that theories of strain, socialization, and stigmatization each confirm the potential for negative developmental outcomes when a father is imprisoned.

It might be argued that removal of a criminally active father improves the environment of the remaining sons. This is not clear from the data. One study (Smith and Clear, 1997) of a male, jail intake sample finds preliminary evidence for the existence of substantial positive parenting prior to incarceration. After the male's imprisonment, the responses of the jailed inmate's family to his incarceration include address changes because the remaining family moved into more cramped quarters and new school districts; family disruption, including the arrival of new male roles into the family replacing the inmate; reduced time for maternal parenting due to taking secondary employment; and so on. Thus, we need not demonstrate the positive parenting skills of active offenders. Rather, all of these factors are potentially disruptive forces for the family, and each tends to disturb family cohesiveness, which studies show would predict serious delinquency (Sampson, 1987).

Children's internalization of social norms may also be disrupted by high levels of incarceration. Changes in parental working conditions and family circumstances are known to affect children's social adjustment and norm transmission across generations (Parcel and Menaghan, 1993). Adult

crime is also connected both to childhood experience and to changes in adult social bonds (Laub and Sampson, 1993). School success is linked to family structure, which has an effect independent of social class and parenting style in impoverished families (Vacha and McLaughlin, 1992). Teachman et al.'s (1997) longitudinal survey found an interaction between social capital, as measured by family structures and parental interaction with their children and their children's schools, and the drop-out rate of high school students. From this, we can deduce that if a parent is incarcerated, and the stability of the family is thus jeopardized, the remaining parent has less time for interaction with the children or the school, increasing the chances of dropout.

At a most basic level, the absence of males restricts the number of adults available to supervise young people in the neighborhood. While it is commonly assumed that criminally active adults are less capable or willing guardians, there is no evidence to support this. In fact, Venkatesh (1997) reports that although many problems within the housing project he studied were gang related, gang members involved in criminal activity tended to be accepted because they contributed to the well-being of the community in a variety of ways. For instance, they acted as escorts or protectors, renovated basketball courts, and discouraged truancy. These factors eroded perceptions of them as social deviants partly because their roles as sons and brothers helped residents to view them as "only temporarily" bad and partly because the gang helped the community in tangible ways.

The presence of large numbers of unsupervised youth is predictive of serious crime at the neighborhood level (Sampson and Groves, 1989). A recent study (Carlson and Cervera, 1991) shows women had to rely on family and friends to fill the role of their incarcerated husbands in terms of money, companionship, and babysitting. Clearly, some offenders are wholly negative influences on their children. Street ethnographies have shown, however, that active offenders are not always damaging parents. One might plausibly conclude that the parenting skills of many who live in disorganized communities, among them offenders, are problematic. However, one would be unwise to assume, and it would contradict current wisdom on child development, that the absence of such a parent improves the child's situation. Unfortunately, research on the parenting skills of offenders, either pre- or post-incarceration, does not exist to our knowledge.

The incarceration of large numbers of parent-age males also restricts the number of male partners available within the neighborhood. This means that mothers find more competition for partners and parents for their children. In the context of more competitive parental situations, mothers may feel reluctant to end relationships that are unsuitable for children partly because prospects for a suitable replacement are perceived as poor. Males

under these odds may also feel less incentive to remain in committed parenting partnerships.

It is known that abusive relationships with parents contribute to later delinquency. Early childhood abuse results in earlier criminal activity, increased risk of an arrest during adolescence (by more than 50%), and adults with twice as many arrests as control groups (Widom, 1994). Even in the case of offenders who are abusers, the question is whether their removal ends the child's experience of abuse. If males eliminated from the home are replaced with others who continue to abuse, the trade is a net negative. Where the remaining family unit is forced to choose from a thinning stock of males, the options may not be attractive. For those women who end abusive relationships and live alone, the neighborhood implications may also be problematic: A substantial body of research finds that violent crime is higher in localities with high rates of single-parent households (Pope, 1979; Roncek, 1981; Sampson, 1985), and one study shows that rates of out-of-wedlock births predict levels of incarceration across time in the United States (Jacobs and Helms, 1996). While it is undetermined whether single-parent households are producing the violent offenders or merely serve as easier targets for violent offenders (Roncek, 1981), either scenario resulting from fewer males is detrimental to the neighborhood.

This chain of negative effects on the family—the socialization unit of private social control—contributes to the gradual reduction of social capital within a community. None of these changes by itself “causes” delinquency, but such disruptions are associated with earlier and more active delinquent careers. Their effects would be expected to be additive and in more extreme levels of removal of males, interactive.

#### ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Fagan's (1997) exhaustive review of legal and illegal work illustrates that it is simplistic to view offenders as solely illegally employed. Research shows that many, if not most, criminals also have legal employment so that their removal from the neighborhood removes a worker from the local economy. Fagan recognizes the argument that removing a single offender who held a legal job frees that position for another (potentially nonoffending) resident. However, in local areas where a high proportion of residents engage in both legal and illegal work, Fagan notes that removing many individuals may devastate the local economy. Even if sending an offender to prison does free the legitimate job for someone else, at best this simply shifts the economic benefit of the job from one community household to another, with no net benefit to the neighborhood as a whole. In large numbers, however, it ravages supplies of local human capital and

leaves a gap in employable residents. The result is that numerous household units suffer specific losses and the community suffers a net loss. Even families that reap the individual benefit of newly available employment suffer the indirect costs of depleted neighborhood economic strength.

Family members earning money contribute to the welfare of their families, and this remains true even when some of those earnings are from criminal activity (such as drug sales). Edin and Lein (1997) show that in an effort to sustain their families, mothers rely upon regular, substantial financial help from people in their personal networks because neither welfare nor low-paying jobs provide sufficient income to cover expenses. In this study, 69 to 91% of the respondents reported they had received money from members in their networks, 40 to 55% had received cash from their families, 24 to 32% received cash from their boyfriends, and 27 to 41% received cash from their child's father. Incarceration removes from the neighborhood many of the men who provide some type of support to these women.

Prior to incarceration, most prisoners are an economic resource to their neighborhoods and immediate families. Sullivan's work (1989) suggests that in impoverished neighborhoods, a work-age male generates economic activity that translates into purchases at the local deli, child support, and so forth. This economic value is generated in a variety of endeavors, including off-the-books work, intermittent illicit drug trade, theft, welfare, and part-time employment. Once arrested and incarcerated, this economic value is transformed and transferred. It is transformed into penal capital—the demand for salaried correctional employees to provide security. It is also transferred to the locality of the prison, where the penal system's employees reside and live. Thus, in the case of New York, a resident of Bedford-Stuyvesant, arrested and convicted, is transformed from, say, a \$12,000 resource in his community to a \$30,000 resource in an upstate village. This type of transfer of wealth applies to as many as 70% of New York State's 69,000 inmates (Clines, 1992).

What happens to a neighborhood that experiences a steady growth in these transfers of its wealth? Economic hardship is one of the strongest geographic predictors of crime rates. The socially imbedded nature of crime and unemployment suggests that those communities suffering deprivation experience greater criminal involvement among residents (Hagan, 1993). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a neighborhood experiencing economic loss as a result of incarceration will experience an increase in crime (Wilson, 1987). In fact, studies have documented the impact of a community's economic well-being on its level of criminality. Covington and Taylor (1991) show that violent crime is associated with a community's relative deprivation, and Block (1979) found a link between

a community's crime rate and its ratio of wealthy to impoverished residents. These studies confirm that social processes damaging a neighborhood's economic viability may also tend to raise its level of crime. In addition, the level of community-wide labor force participation may be even more important than an individual's employment in shaping individual criminality (Crutchfield and Pitchford, 1997).

Imprisonment not only has an economic effect on the community that was home to the prisoner, it also affects the prisoner's level of human capital directly. Grogger (1995) demonstrated that merely being arrested has a short-term, negative impact on earnings, while Freeman (1992) has shown that suffering a conviction and imprisonment has a permanent impact on earning potential. Individuals suffering from insufficient supplies of human capital are destined to have low-level jobs, which not only do not pay well, but offer no vision for the future. Individuals whose jobs hold no future have less of a stake in conformity and are more likely to engage in criminal activity (Crutchfield, 1997). Experience with the criminal justice system, then, contributes to the very inequality in economic means that promotes street crime in the first place (Braithwaite, 1979). Thus, the criminal justice system leaves economic scars on its clients long after its formal involvement in their lives has ended.

In addition, to the extent incarceration primarily removes young men from the neighborhood, it also increases the likelihood of single-parent families being headed by women. Recent research (Browne, 1997) shows that long-term exposure to welfare, lack of work experience, and having never been married characterize disarticulation from mainstream society for women, a condition contributing to earning differences between black and white women. Thus, large-scale incarceration of men may influence the earning power of the women they leave behind.

The macroeconomics of crime policy also damage inner-city communities by shifting government funding priorities away from those communities toward penal institutions. The harsh budgetary politics of the 1990s has corresponded to equally harsh punitive politics in which correctional expenditures have grown by billions of dollars annually while money to support schools, supplement tuition, provide summer jobs for teens, and so forth all received cuts. The latter provide meager supports for communities already hard hit by crime and justice, and they become even more meager still. Whatever role these social programs play in propping up informal networks of social control is eliminated with the depletion of their funding.

In addition, these policies may even motivate the communities hardest hit by budget cuts to accept or encourage criminal behavior in order to sustain what little sense of community remains. A recent study of an urban housing project found that members of a community council that

was set up, ironically, to discuss gang-related problems within the project would "borrow" money from local gang leaders to sponsor community-oriented activities (Venkatesh, 1997).

#### POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Communities vary in the means they use to deal with problems. While it is generally perceived that poor communities do not organize, some clearly do (Henig, 1982). Researchers have found collective activity, covering a broad range of activities and approaches, in all types of neighborhoods (Podolefsky and DuBow, 1980). Variation in collective action can be attributed to several factors. For instance, the extent to which communities rely upon authority structures or formal social control varies according to differences in the racial and class composition of the community (Bennett, 1995). The degree to which residents perceive that they receive inadequate police services is also related to their propensity to organize locally (Henig, 1982). The political capacity of the community may be a critical factor, too, particularly for communities that have fewer internal resources and need to increase their external resources (Bennett, 1995). In other words, communities vary in their desire and their capacity to organize. The extent to which a neighborhood has developed a network of political and social institutions prior to the occurrence of a specific threat helps to determine whether the community will be able to mobilize collective action against the threat (Henig, 1982).

Bursik and Grasmick's (1993:52) systemic model of social control shows that it is the interrelationship between community institutions and between community organizations and outside agencies that draws upon and produces social capital. Areas with well-developed networks are able to acquire externally based goods and services that enhance their ability to fight crime locally. Communities without such programs may not have extensive connections to the wider community or may not know how to obtain external funding and other necessary resources (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:15). In addition, most successful programs build upon existing networks, and disrupting these networks may damage already fragile programs.

For the disruption of networks through incarceration to affect the functioning of neighborhood programs and efforts at social control, we need not make the argument that offenders are active participants in local political efforts. Rather, we need only make the argument that their removal disrupts the networks of other individuals who otherwise might participate.

Males who are removed from the community are related to many of those left behind. They are brothers, fathers, uncles. Podolefsky and

DuBow (1980) find that residents who define the crime problem as stemming from inside the neighborhood advocate different control tactics than do residents who see crime as coming from outside. To the extent residents define the problem as stemming from inside the neighborhood, they are inclined to develop a social-problems approach to crime reduction; to the extent they define the problem as coming from outside the neighborhood, they are likely to define a victimization approach. A social-problems approach focuses on improving social conditions thought to be the root of crime, such as youth problems, job opportunities, and neighborhood environmental improvement. A victimization approach focuses on protective and surveillance behavior and on efforts to increase sanctions for offenders. Policymakers who may not understand that residents make this distinction often implement victimization-approach strategies when the community would prefer a social-problems approach.

One factor determining participation in local political structures is belief in their efficacy. In disorganized communities there is reason to suspect residents do not believe that the state's justice agencies work on their behalf. Most minority children can tell stories of racism in the criminal justice system, and the validation of these tales is apparent to the eye. One-in-three African-American males in his twenties is under some form of formal justice system control; in many cities, half of this group are subjects of the system (Mauer, 1995). Many are casualties of the war on drugs. Instituted at the national level, this war was fought at the local level. In a comprehensive review of drug policy, Goetz (1996) points out that policy is often driven by the conscious political strategy of politicians rather than by levels of crime. Further, the spatial impact of this war has been a concentrated increase in criminal justice activity in lower income, inner-city neighborhoods. Just as Lessan and Sheley (1992) found that military wars are associated with increases in arrests due to increased local surveillance and decreased tolerance of deviance, the drug war may also have spilled over into increased arrests for nondrug offenses, as police scour the streets for evidence of drug crimes. Each of these drug offenders eventually returns to the community further criminalized by prison experiences. Moreover, the alienation of otherwise law-abiding residents who no longer feel part of a society that is so hostile to the drug economy (one dimension of Wilson's social isolation) leaves them less likely to participate in local political organizations or to submit to the authority of more formal ones.

The overwhelming presence of American criminal justice in these communities goes a long way to defining the meaning of the state for this segment of society. The state is most likely to be encountered as a coercive agent of control rather than a "fair" agent of justice, and when this is true

people are less likely to conform their behavior to the requirements of the law (Tyler, 1990).

Communities with high rates of incarceration may spawn beliefs about the state that are contentious. In Philadelphia, a small cadre of police (perhaps as few as 10) was found to have been planting evidence and falsifying testimony to achieve convictions in African-American neighborhoods (New York Times, 1996). Already nearly 200 convictions have been overturned and dozens of wrongfully incarcerated offenders have been released from prison, including a grandmother whose conviction was obtained through planted drugs as a way to teach her drug-dealing grandson "a lesson." In the past few years, this crew has been responsible for nearly 2,000 convictions that authorities are reviewing for illegality. One can imagine the impressions of the criminal justice system formed by the victims of the perhaps 1,000 false imprisonments, and the impressions of their children, siblings, spouses, and in-laws. The effect of malfeasance of the law within these communities is geometric. This is one of the reasons why it would surprise few to learn that many inner-city young people define the power of the state as a nemesis to be avoided rather than an ally to be cultivated. In the community, disillusionment with the political structure probably erodes residents' feeling of empowerment and reduces their willingness to participate in local politics. As a result, the call for citizen involvement may fall on deaf ears.

There is another level at which this negative political impact may operate: It may reduce deterrence. Finckenauer's (1982) study of Rahway prison's "Scared Straight" program found that those exposed to the harsh, accusatory taunting by the lifers actually had more delinquency than a comparison group not exposed to the program. Finckenauer concluded from this that the Scared Straight program failed as a deterrent. But we may ask whether the results are not even more disquieting. Most who study prison life believe there are significant brutalizing effects to imprisonment that impair prisoners' inclinations to conform to the law. Strongly suggestive evidence (Cochran et al., 1994) exists, for example, that the use of the death penalty has brutalizing effects on the general public. Is it not more reasonable to expect that the broader exposure of specific publics to the realities of prison life also brutalizes them in a similar way?

Stated in another way, part of the deterrent power of the prison may be strengthened by the mystery that surrounds it. Once experienced, prison, no matter how harsh, is transformed from an awful mystery to a real-life ordeal that has been suffered and survived. High recidivism rates are consistent with the idea that prison experiences fail to deter. Fear of prison (especially among the middle class who have not experienced it) may be most potent when it is an unacquainted fear.

In minority communities, prison is a part of life. A black 10-year-old is

likely to have at least one (and likely more) ex-cons among his fathers, uncles, brothers, and neighbors. The lesson is that prison is not awesome, but is survivable. Widespread use of prison is tantamount to a widespread reassurance that prison is "normal." Thus, the politics of imprisonment may be a combination of increasing resentment and decreasing marginal gain. Turning dominant cultural symbols upside down, there is even the claim that inner-city residents accrue street status from surviving prison (Shakur, 1993).

### ILLEGITIMATE SYSTEMS

To this point we have discussed only the legitimate components of neighborhood structure that promote self-regulation. But high levels of incarceration also affect illegitimate local activity in unintended ways—to mangle Tip O'Neill's famous observation about politics, we might say that "all street crime is local." By saying this, we mean that with the exception of some rare instances of violent crime, all criminality is contextual, embedded in interpersonal and group relations. These relations may be seen as illegitimate systems that operate at the neighborhood level, also subject to the effects of incarceration.

Crime is often a group phenomenon (see Reiss, 1988). Young males commit much of their street-level acquisitional crime in groups—muggings, burglaries, robberies, and so forth. Nearly all drug crime, from sales to consumption, is a group activity. In fact, Warr (1996) has shown recently that delinquents belong to multiple groups, but only for a brief period. Each group, then, is constantly undergoing a process of reconfiguration and renewal with new members. Further, he finds that it is the configuration of the group that determines which member will instigate the offense rather than a stable set of "hardened" delinquents continually motivating others into crime. This raises the question of what happens when the criminal justice system removes one member of a criminal group. The hope is that the disruption will be sufficient to end the activities of the group and/or that the general deterrent effect will be sufficient to dissuade others from participating. It may often be, however, that the group continues its criminal activity as before. The group may even recruit a replacement member in order to carry out criminal functions at continuing levels. For every group that replaces removed members, little or no crime prevention is achieved by the incarceration of the initial member.

This is almost certainly the case with drug-related crime. Offenders serving sentences for drug crimes have skyrocketed from less than 10% of a much smaller prison stock in 1980 to about one-third of the population in 1996 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). Drug demand fluctuates for a variety of reasons, but it is largely unaffected by who is around to sell the drugs, as long as someone is willing to do the job—when the economic

reasons for selling drugs persist, the criminal actions of the group go on largely uninterrupted (Caulkins et al., 1997). This may be worse than a mere wash, however. Implicit within the replacement idea is “recruitment”, that is, a young male otherwise at the margin of criminal groups becomes more intimately associated with them. In the case of drug crime, for example, a young male who otherwise might have been in school or in search of legal work is instead recruited into the drug trade. This male, who might have left young adulthood without close association with crime groups, instead becomes initiated into criminal enterprise—with lifelong implications. The results of criminal replacement may sometimes include augmentation of a criminal career.

## DISCUSSION

The thesis of this study has been that an overreliance on formal controls may increase disorganization by impeding other forms of control. High incarceration rates may contribute to rates of criminal violence by the way they contribute to such social problems as inequality, family life deterioration, economic and political alienation, and social disorganization. Concentrated within certain communities, high levels of incarceration undermine social, political, and economic systems already weakened by the low levels of human and social capital produced under conditions such as high rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime. Further impairing these damaged systems means that communities with scarce supplies of human and social capital are unable to produce the resource they so greatly need. The result is a reduction in social cohesion and a lessening of those communities’ capacity for self-regulation.

The counterproductive capacity of excessive incarceration helps explain the conundrum of contemporary penal policy: Incarcerating ever more offenders has not produced a consistent decrease in crime rates. Since 1973, the number of offenders incarcerated in prisons and jails has increased every year, from about 350,000 to over 1.5 million. But crime has fluctuated during that time period. Today’s decreases were preceded by years of increases, and those increases were themselves preceded by a period of first increase and then decrease. By contrast, incarceration has done nothing but increase at an essentially stable rate. This suggests that crime control is not directly related to incarceration, because the social control capacity of the growth in imprisonment has been blunted by other social forces. We have argued that the impact of concentrated incarceration rates on social disorganization is one of those forces.

This extension of social disorganization theory has important theoretical and policy-related implications. Theoretically, it means that simple recursive studies of disorganization may be inadequate. The growing body of

evidence suggests that communities are embedded in a system that reflects and continually reproduces levels of disorganization. It also means that one must look to additional sources of disorganization. Clearly, empirical research should be conducted to test the central tenets of this study.

Our hypotheses could be tested directly by investigating the linkages between the effects of a concentration of high incarceration rates and the net impact on family and social life, analyzed at the neighborhood level. For instance, if communities suffering from the removal of a large number of adult males through incarceration could be shown to suffer subsequently from higher rates of single-parent families, more out-of-wedlock births, an increase in residential mobility for the remaining family members, and higher crime, that would begin to provide empirical evidence supporting our theoretical case that a reliance on incarceration is one of the social conditions leading to crime. This is a conclusion other researchers (see Lynch and Sabol, 1992, for example) have already begun to draw. To develop fully an empirical test of a nonrecursive process requires data organized by neighborhoods, and such data are not yet currently available. (For an explication of the lack of such data and a description of the problems in collecting them, see Bursik and Grasmick, 1993.) A further testing of our argument awaits the availability of suitable data.

If our hypothesis has some value, it raises enormous implications for social policy on crime. For one thing, it confirms the common aphorism about prison construction, that society cannot build its way out of the crime problem. It also explains why this is so: The more society builds prisons, the more it cultivates the crime problem for which building is proposed as a solution. A crime control strategy that looks only to coerce compliance from members of communities and that ignores the ways in which it can strengthen the neighborhood's internal mechanism of social control is worse than neutral. It is self-defeating.

There is reason to think this pattern applies primarily (perhaps even exclusively) to the most resource-poor communities. These areas suffer from the most crime partly because they lack enough social and human capital in the first place. As a result, they suffer the most from incarceration and its unintended consequences. Stronger communities produce fewer offenders because they suffer from fewer of the environmental conditions conducive to crime. Also, because stronger communities have larger supplies of human and social capital, they have stronger foundational structures and, as a result, suffer from less crime. Incarceration is a crime control strategy that works for these communities because there are fewer offenders. Of these, few are removed (most stay within local formal control systems such as probation) and the disruption caused by their absence is minimal.

By contrast, high-crime neighborhoods are also high-incarceration

neighborhoods. In these places, children are more likely to experience family disruption, lack of parental supervision, property devoid of effective guardians, and all other manner of deteriorated informal social controls that otherwise deflect the young from criminal behavior. This is the point Etzioni (1996) recently made when he argued that an overreliance on external control agencies actually weakens the capacity of communities to exert their own self-management. The prison can never be a substitute for absent adults, family members, and neighbors in making places safe.

We emphasize that our position does not suggest a wholesale rejection of incarceration; we do not believe in instituting policies that leave communities at risk. Imprisonment of people who threaten the personal safety of residents may well decrease the demand for self-regulation and thereby increase its relative effectiveness. But many (if not most) offenders occupy an actual or potential relationship to private and parochial control systems. They are, for example, parents, employees, neighbors, and so forth. Removing these residents eliminates their actual and potential role in neighborhood self-regulation. The result is that formal and public social control policies based upon the extensive use of incarceration contain, at the neighborhood level, the seeds of their own demise.

Our position is that society must consider the relationships among various forms of control so that it can employ practices that maximize the effectiveness of each level of control. This is not as radical an idea as it may appear. Neighborhood-based approaches are nothing new to justice agencies. The most obvious examples are community-based policing strategies that establish partnerships with neighborhood groups and residents (Robinson, 1996). These strategies define crime-related problems very broadly and seek to work with neighborhood members at every step in confronting crime. The result is not that neighborhood members "turn over" their crime problem to an external formal control agency, but rather that their actions are incorporated into a broader anticrime effort. Under community policing approaches, law enforcement comes to be defined as a local activity, and law enforcers align themselves with resident groups and individuals. Equally important, the police come to define their own successes not in terms of mere arrests, but in terms of the quality of life of the residents they serve.

We make a distinction between the top-down community policing strategies we criticized earlier and the bottom-up approaches to which we refer here. The "get tough" community policing approach involving street sweeps and the widespread use of arrests may undercut private and parochial social control processes. By contrast, the kind of policing philosophy of Charleston Police Chief Reuben Greenberg (Butterfield, 1996) illustrates what we mean by providing supports for these neighborhood systems of self-regulation. Children found after curfew or in truancy are not

arrested but returned to their parents or the school. Law enforcement officials are available to monitor (and presumably advise) parental disciplinary actions with their children. Controversial as these programs are, they also link public social control efforts to the existing private capacities for self-regulation. Further, they are being shown to work. Boston Police Commissioner Paul Evans recently attributed his city's decline in violence to the combined strength of neighborhood involvement and aggressive policing. This collaborative effort between the police and local groups, leaders and residents, works, he says, because, "arresting people without involving the community in the overall effort is counterproductive" (Herbert, 1997).

Approaches such as these that have the capacity for enriching human and social capital and that build foundational systems offer promise of strengthening neighborhood capacities to confront crime, and criminal justice agencies have begun moving in this direction. For instance, the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1996:10) report on violence prevention lists as one of its main goals the strengthening and mobilizing of communities, which "means enabling residents to recognize and solve their own problems and creating opportunities for everyone to take responsibility for finding solutions." The American Probation and Parole Association (1996) lists 15 exemplary programs in which probation and parole agencies work in tandem with neighborhood groups to deal with local crime problems. When prosecutors move their offices into the local neighborhood and focus on quality-of-life problems in those areas, they find themselves asked to deal with a range of problems far broader than serious, felony crime (Boland, 1996). In Vermont (Perry and Gorczyk, 1997), the Department of Corrections requires all offenders to engage in some form of community reparative labor, such as repairing substandard housing or providing services to the elderly or incapacitated. Braithwaite's (1989) theory of "reintegrative shaming" has kindled "family conferencing" approaches with juvenile delinquents, in which a group of local citizens preside over a process involving young offenders and their victims aimed at offenders' learning the consequences of their misdeeds and re-committing to abstain from the behavior in the future (Van Ness and Strong, 1997). Some have described the appearance of these and myriad other new, local justice programs as heralding the arrival of a new ideal of "community justice" (Clear and Karp, 1998).

Noncriminal justice approaches may also be used to strengthen community self-regulation around crime. New York City's Beacon Community Center Program is a school-based, multipurpose, violence prevention strategy that addresses "a wide range of critical needs of at-risk youth" in school settings. It focuses on preventing violence, drug abuse, and other social problems by identifying individual, family, school, peer group, and

community risk factors for crime and seeking to enhance protective mechanisms to avoid them (McGillis, 1996). The Vera Institute (Shapiro, 1997) operates an experimental family drug crisis center that has as one of its specific aims the amelioration of problems encountered by families of addicts who become involved in the criminal justice system. This is a direct attempt to reduce and control the social damage caused by coercive criminal justice responses to crime.

These various strategies are different from each other in a number of important respects, of course, but for our purposes they all share critical common components. They retain offenders in their communities, treat offenders as potential resources to strengthen communities, use local resources to transform offenders into social capital, and thereby strengthen the capacity for self-regulation within these localities. Until this type of community justice strategy becomes the norm, communities hard hit by crime will continue to be hard hit by crime control responses. And, if our theory is correct, the system will ever grow from its own seeds.

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