

Thursday, January 12th

Two theoretical traditions

- Individual-level explanations
 - o Why does person A engage in crime, but person B does not?
 - o Why does Person A get victimized, but person B does not?
- Aggregate-level explanations
 - o Why does neighborhood A continuously have high crime rate generation after generation?

Major aggregate-level theories

- Social disorganization
 - o A lack of informal social controls allow crime
- Sub/Cultural
 - o Some groups believe that crime is acceptable
- Routine activities
 - o Motivated offenders, suitable targets, incapable guardians
- Social disorder/Broken windows
 - o Small problems lead to bigger problems

Tuesday January 17th

What is the social disorganization tradition?

- The theoretical and empirical research extending from the Chicago school's focus on the ecological causes of crime
 - o Explains crime via the breakdown of various social institutions in inner-city neighborhoods

- E.g., family, education, employment, religion, politics
- o As institutions breakdown, fewer *INFORMAL* social controls are able to keep crime in check
 - Also makes formal control (i.e., policing) more difficult

The Chicago school

- University of Chicago 1920-1940
 - o Sociological researchers begin trying to answer the question: “why do some communities have high crime rates over time?”
 - o Answer: social ecology
 - How individuals interact and respond to the environment in which they live
 - Specifically, how do community context can lead to crime
 - Also known as the ECOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF CRIMINOLOGY

Contributions from the Chicago school

- Concentric zone theory (Park et al.)
 - o As cities expand, zones develop with different characteristics
 - o Which area has the most crime and why?
 - The inner loop
 - o Which area has the least? Why?
 - The residential zone/ commuter zone
- 1.) new groups move into transitional zone
 - o close to employment in CBD, cheap housing
- 2.) groups move to other zones as they acculturate, gain wealth, and improve circumstances
 - o find steady well paying work, afford better housing, afford personal transportation

- 3.) new groups move into transitional zone and replace those who have moved out (i.e., succession)
 - o why is such upward mobility not necessarily a good thing?
- How are institutions negatively affected?
 - o Mobility
 - o Poverty
 - o Heterogeneity of cultural backgrounds
 - o Disorder
- Does concentric zone theory still apply today?
 - o Chicago vs. Los Angeles
 - o Gentrification
 - o Advancements in technology
- Social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay)
 - o Three characteristics of structural disadvantage common to all neighborhoods in transitional zone
 - Poverty
 - Residential instability
 - Racial/ethnic heterogeneity
 - o These three factors all empirically tied to high rates of juvenile delinquency over time
- But structural disadvantage IS NOT social disorganization
 - o Structural disadvantage leads to:
 - 1.) increase in criminal values
 - 2.) decrease in informal social control