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# The Social Ecology of Crime

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# Urban Crime Rates: Effects of Inequality, Welfare Dependency, Region, and Race

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If crime is to be explained from a sociological perspective, it should be viewed as a product of social organization. The two basic dimensions of social organization are *culture* and *social structure*. There are, in turn, two generic causal models of crime in sociology: a *cultural model,* which explains crime as a product of conformity to cultural or subcultural values, and a *structural model*, which explains crime as a product of structural discontinuity or disorganization.[1] Two contemporary variants of the structural model of crime may also be distinguished: *control theory* and *strain theory*. Control theory assumes that crime results from a breakdown in structural controls over behavior. Strain theory assumes that crime results from an anomic imbalance or contradiction between culture and social structure.[2]

This chapter derives empirical propositions from the two sociological models of crime and examines them with data on urban crime rates in the United States. A proposition is derived from strain theory linking variations in urban crime rates with relative deprivation. Control theory is investigated in an analysis of the effects of welfare dependency on urban crime. The cultural model is assessed in an analysis of regional and racial effects on violent crime. Some of the findings of the empirical analysis, including those concerning the connection between race and crime, call into question common theoretical assumptions and the results of recent studies in the literature on the structural and cultural sources of variation in aggregate crime rates. The theoretical implications of these

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[1]It may be objected that there are at least two additional "models" of crime and deviance in sociology, the conflict and interactionist perspectives, and perhaps even one more, the functionalist theory of deviance. However, these perspectives are not strictly commensurate with the cultural and structural models because they do not intend to explain the causes so much as the *consequences* of deviance.

[2]See Rosenfeld (1984) for a detailed explication of each of these perspectives.

and other findings are considered in the conclusion of this chapter, and several avenues for subsequent investigation are suggested.

## Data and Method

The unit of analysis employed in this study is the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). The type of analysis is cross-sectional and the method is ordinary least-squares regression. The dependent variables are the index crimes reported in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) for SMSAs in 1970 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1971). The offense data are derived from police reports and are expressed as rates per 100,000 population. The findings and conclusions of this investigation are thus limited by the well-known validity and reliability problems affecting all studies which utilize "offenses known to the police."[3]

Independent variables are derived from data obtained from census and other sources as described below. Each subanalysis is based upon the total number of cases for which all requisite data were available.

## Strain, Relative Deprivation, and Crime

Strain theory, of which Merton (1938) is the exemplar, holds that crime results when legitimate structural means are insufficient to attain culturally approved success goals. "Success," from this perspective, is not biologically or psychologically fixed, but culturally and historically variable. It follows that crime should be related to economic inequality rather than a poverty of means, to relative rather than absolute deprivation (see Coser, 1967, for an explicit connection between strain and relative-deprivation approaches to crime).

However, differential access to legitimate means is not, by itself, a sufficient cause of crime. Structural inequality or deprivation produces pressures to deviate under very specific and distinct cultural circumstances. Merton maintains that the relationship between "deprivation and crime" is high where there is great "cultural emphasis on monetary accumulation as a symbol of success," and low where there is not. For Merton, culture conditions the association between structural inequality and crime (Merton, 1938, p. 680-681).

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[3]See the review in Decker, Schichor, and O'Brien (1982, p. 21-24). Some researchers have concluded that, in spite of their shortcomings, the UCR measures are fairly valid for purposes of intercity comparisons (e.g., Hindelang, 1974; Skogan, 1974). Other researchers have questioned this assumption, at least for certain of the index offenses (Booth, Johnson, and Choldin, 1977; Decker, Shichor, and O'Brien, 1982; O'Brien, Shichor, and Becker, 1980).

Two propositions may be derived from this discussion: (1) Crime rates should be more strongly associated with variations in inequality than poverty rates. (2) The relationship between crime and inequality should be maximized in the presence of strong aspirations for economic achievement. Both propositions receive support in recent empirical investigations of urban crime rates.

Several recent studies have found a relationship between income inequality and urban crime rates, many also reporting little or no relationship between poverty and crime after inequality is controlled (Blau & Blau, 1982; Braithwaite, 1979; Council on Municipal Performance, 1973; Danziger, 1976; Danziger & Wheeler, 1975; Jacobs, 1981; see, also, the review in Long & Witte, 1981). Moreover, Rosenfeld (1982) reports significant associations between several violent and property crimes and a "relative deprivation" variable (RD) which incorporates a measure of economic aspirations along with economic inequality. Because these findings are based upon the same data set used to test propositions from the other sociological perspectives on crime, and for ease of direct comparison, they are reproduced here.

Table 7.1 displays the effects of RD, in the form of standardized regression coefficients, upon the rates of seven index offenses for the 125 largest SMSAs in 1970. RD is defined as the product of the intensity of deprivation, the scope of deprivation, and the level of economic aspirations among poor families in the SMSA.[4] The intensity of deprivation is measured by the difference between the mean income of families below the poverty level and the mean income of all families in the SMSA. The scope of deprivation is measured by the percentage of families with incomes below the federal poverty level in 1969. Aspirations are measured by the ratio of median years of school completed by heads of poverty families to median years of school completed by all family heads. This measure assumes that the economic aspirations of low-income people will vary directly with their educational attainment vis-á-vis that of middle-income comparative referents (see Rosenfeld, 1982, p. 13-15, for a more complete description of and rationale for RD).

Table 7.1 also shows the effects of three additional variables on crime rates, employed as controls in this analysis: SMSA population size (POP), unemployment rate (UNEM), and regional location (REGION).[5]

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[4]The intensity of deprivation may be defined as the degree of discrepancy or difference between *capabilities* and *expectations*. The scope of deprivation refers to the proportion of a population sharing some specified level of deprivation (see Gurr, 1970, p.59-91).

[5]Population totals are 1970 estimates from Federal Bureau of Investigation (1971). The unemployment measure is the percentage of the unemployed civilian labor force, taken from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973). Regional location is a South-nonsouth dummy variable.

TABLE 7.1. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination for Relative Deprivation, Controls, and Crime (N = 125)

| | Murder | Rape | Robbery | Assault | Burglary | Larceny | Motor vehicle theft |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POP | .19* | .17** | .68* | .24* | .17* | .11 | .37* |
| UNEM | −.14 | .01 | .00 | −.04 | .21** | .22** | −.09 |
| REGION | .49* | −.04 | .17 | .42* | .10 | −.07 | −.17 |
| RD | .27* | .52* | .06 | .30* | .39* | .33* | .28** |
| $R^2$ | .52 | .30 | .48 | .46 | .32 | .20 | .21 |

*Note.* POP = SMSA population size. UNEM = unemployment rate. REGION = regional location. RD = relative deprivation. Table adapted from Rosenfeld (1982: Table 4).
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$.

The disproportionate concentration of crime in large cities is a long-standing criminological finding, often interpreted in terms of Wirth's (1938) classic discussion of urban heterogeneity, density, and anonymity (see, e.g., Skogan, 1979, p. 380-382). In light of the substantial body of theory and research on unemployment and crime (see Braithwaite, 1979; Long & Witte, 1981; Thompson, Sviridoff, & McElroy, 1981) it seems advisable to include a measure of unemployment in the present investigation. Finally, regional location is included for purposes of subsequent analysis of the thesis of a southern subculture of violence.

Controlling for population size, unemployment rate, and regional location, relative deprivation has significant effects on six of the seven index offenses. While the absence of an effect on robbery rates is puzzling, these findings are generally consistent with the proposition that crime is generated by economic inequality in the presence of high aspirations. Moreover, other findings show that the combination of aspirations with inequality has a stronger effect on crime rates than does inequality alone, consistent with strain-theoretical expectations (see Rosenfeld, 1982, p. 15). If the measure of relative deprivation employed in this study is a valid operationalization of Mertonian strain theory, there would seem to be considerable support for the theory at the aggregate level.

## Control, Welfare Dependency, and Crime

Control theories locate the causes of crime and delinquency in the absence or weakening of social control (Hirschi, 1969; Kornhauser, 1978; Reckless, 1973). The breaking of the social bond or deterioration of internal or external constraints upon behavior "frees" the individual to deviate. From a control perspective, a basic function of social structure is

to link culture with behavior. Individual behavior is socially controlled to the extent it is directed along culturally approved pathways. Two important institutional settings in which normative controls are implemented are the family and the labor market. If the control function of either of these institutions is seriously attenuated or disrupted, deviance and crime are likely to result.

The public provision of monetary assistance to poor families (welfare) has been criticized for undermining the control functions of both the family and labor market, and therefore for generating crime. Conservative critics of the "War on Poverty" charged that the "welfare explosion" of the 1960s was at least partially responsible for skyrocketing crime rates in American cities (see, e.g., Banfield, 1970; Wilson, 1975). More recently, a conservative writer has claimed that the expansion of the assistance rolls during the 1960s actually *reversed* ongoing improvements and brought about unprecedented levels of suffering, dependency, and pathology in urban poor communities (Gilder, 1981, p. 13). The conservatives maintain that welfare leads to crime by disrupting and breaking apart families and by weakening labor-market controls. Gilder claims that the increased availability of assistance resulted in "a virtual plague of family dissolution". Furthermore, because the availability of nonmarket incomes reduces reliance upon labor-market incentives, welfare contributes to the high labor-force withdrawal rates of teenagers (especially blacks), and therefore to high teenage crime rates (Gilder, 1981, p.14).

The conservative critique of welfare dependency has an interesting complement in recent radical analyses of American social policy. Gilder's argument concerning the impact of public assistance on labor-market controls is, in essentials, quite close to the Piven-Cloward thesis on state policy, public assistance, and labor-market functioning. While they have little to say about crime rates per se, Piven and Cloward (1971, 1982) propose that a crucial function of income maintenance and other social-welfare programs has been to weaken employer control and power over labor. However one radical analyst has explicitly linked welfare and urban crime rates: "One might even say that through AFDC, the federal government places its stamp of approval on both the fatherless inner-city family and the pursuit of crime as the solution to black men's unemployment problems" (Harris, 1981, p.131).

Despite their differences concerning crime causation, both the conservative and radical critiques of welfare policy predict that cities with high dependency rates should, other things being equal, also have high crime rates. The single existing study of the effects of public assistance on variations in SMSA crime rates (DeFronzo, 1983) focuses upon *levels* rather than rates of assistance. DeFronzo (1983) looked at the effects of the level of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments upon crime rates among the 39 SMSAs for which 1970 cost-of-living data

TABLE 7.2. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination for Welfare Dependency, Welfare Eligibility, Controls, and Crime (N = 204)

| | Murder | Rape | Robbery | Assault | Burglary | Larceny | Motor vehicle theft |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POP | .21* | .29* | .65* | .23* | .25* | .15** | .36* |
| UNEM | −.12** | .15** | −.04 | −.04 | .23* | .27* | −.13** |
| REGION | .57* | .21* | .14** | .49* | .31* | .23* | .03 |
| WELEL | .14** | .16 | .04 | .17** | −.02 | −.17** | −.03 |
| WELDEP | .20* | .11 | .12 | .10 | .11 | .03 | .33* |
| $R^2$ | .48 | .18 | .49 | .35 | .19 | .13 | .32 |

*Note.* POP = SMSA population size. UNEM = unemployment rate. REGION = regional location. WELEL = welfare eligibility. WELDEP = welfare dependency.
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$.

were available. He found a *negative* relationship between benefit levels and the rates of homicide, rape, and burglary, controlling for income inequality, unemployment, racial composition, and other factors.

This chapter investigates the relationship between crime and assistance rates, as measured by the percentage of the poverty population receiving public assistance. Table 7.2 shows the effects of this measure of welfare dependency (WELDEP) on the seven index offense rates for the 204 SMSAs for which the requisite data were available. Controls are introduced for population size (POP), unemployment rate (UNEM), and regional location (REGION) (as previously described). The crime and population data are from Federal Bureau of Investigation (1971). The unemployment and welfare data are from U.S. Bureau of Census (1973). WELDEP is defined as the percentage of families with incomes below the poverty level receiving public assistance. Thus WELDEP is a measure of dependency and not simply a redundant measure of poverty. Table 7.2 also includes a separate measure of welfare *eligibility* (WELEL).

There is, not surprisingly, a moderate tendency for SMSAs located in states with lenient AFDC guidelines to have higher rates of welfare dependency than those located in more restrictive states.[6] However, neither welfare variable has a strong or consistent effect upon crime rates. Dependency shows a small but significant effect upon murder rates and a moderate effect upon motor-vehicle theft. The latter is somewhat

[6] $r = -.39$. WELEL is derived from the index of restrictiveness of state AFDC eligibility guidelines reported in Campbell and Bendick (1977, p. 85-86). Each SMSA was assigned the index value of the state in which it is located. The more restrictive a state's guidelines, the higher its score on the index, thus accounting for the negative correlation between WELDEP and WELEL.

surprising in light of DeFronzo's conclusion that, owing to both the highly organized nature of the offense on the one hand, and youthful "fun and excitement" quality on the other, assistance should have little effect upon motor-vehicle theft (DeFronzo, 1983, p.132). Eligibility restrictiveness has small significant effects on murder, assault, and larceny rates. However, in the cases of murder and assault, these results are the *opposite* of what would be expected on the basis of the conservative critique of welfare policy. Consistent with DeFronzo's (1983) findings for benefit levels, there is a slight tendency for cities with relatively lenient welfare eligibility rules to have lower rates of murder and assault than those with more restrictive rules.

Overall, however, the present investigation provides only weak support for arguments stipulating a welfare-crime connection, positive or negative. While these results are provisional and should be replicated under alternative specifications,[7] they do indicate that the effect of welfare dependency on crime has probably been exaggerated by both conservative and radical critics of welfare policy. They provide no support for conservative proposals to substantially restrict welfare eligibility, at least in so far as such efforts are justified as a means to reduce moral decay and crime.

## Culture and Crime

The cultural model holds that crime results from conformity. An important application of the model is the "subculture of violence" thesis, which argues that much criminal violence results from conformity to subcultural norms which encourage and support violent and aggressive behavior (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967). Two variants of the subculture of violence thesis are considered in this paper. The first is the Hackney-Gastil hypothesis that accounts for high rates of violent crime in the American South in terms of distinctive regional cultural orientations (Hackney, 1969; Gastil, 1971). The second is the idea of a "black violent contraculture" developed by Curtis (1975) and elaborated by Silberman (1978). The empirical consequences of each of these applications will be

[7]Thus, it could be argued that including welfare dependency and eligibility restrictiveness in the same regression model washes away the effects of the latter on crime rates, since these effects should operate through variations in dependency, which have been controlled. However, if WELDEP is removed from the model and the effects of WELEL are recomputed controlling only for POP, UNEM, and REGION, the results are essentially the same. A small and barely significant positive effect remains for Assault, and a small and significant negative effect remains for Larceny. No significant effect remains for Murder ($\beta = .07$, $p = .24$).

examined against those derived from alternative structural approaches to violent crime.

## Southern Violence

The thesis of a Southern subculture of violence was developed to explain why rates of violent crime, murder and violent assault in particular, have historically been greater in the states of the Confederacy than elsewhere. There is more violence in the South, it has been argued, because a distinctive complex of values developed there which triggers and channels the expression of violent behavior. The historical sources for this violent subculture are said to include defeat in the Civil War, accompanied by a "siege mentality" and defensive Southern pride and honor (Hackney, 1969), the institution of slavery, and the lengthier frontier experience of Southern settlements (Gastil, 1971). Whatever its sources, the violent-value complex is assumed to have persisted beyond its original structural moorings.

The cultural explanation of Southern violence has been questioned by investigators who claim that rates of violence are higher in the South because there is greater structural deprivation and inequality there, and not because distinctive Southern values foster violence (see, e.g., Blau & Blau, 1982; Braithwaite, 1979). The competing claims have been evaluated at the aggregate level according to the assumption that structure explains violence to the degree that, when structural variables are controlled, the association between region and crime disappears, and culture explains violence to the degree it does not. The structural explanation has been upheld in certain investigations (e.g., Blau & Blau, 1982; Erlanger, 1974; 1976; Loftin & Hill, 1974), and the cultural explanation in others, notably Messner (1982; 1983).

If the presence of regional effects after structural variables are controlled is taken as evidence for the cultural approach to Southern violence, the present study lends support to the cultural position. Table 7.1 shows that, with population size, unemployment rate, and a measure of relative deprivation controlled, substantial regional effects upon murder and assault remain. Significantly, in both cases the regional effect is larger than the effect of relative deprivation. The absence of significant regional effects for nonviolent offenses, or for the violent offense of rape, provides further substantiation for the cultural argument. The effect of regional location is specific to precisely those offenses predicted to have subcultural causes.

Additional structural variables will have to be included in subsequent analyses of the regional subculture-of-violence hypothesis before alternative explanations can be conclusively rejected. However, these findings, together with Messner's (1982; 1983) results for homicide, shift the

burden of proof back to those who would continue to argue that regional variations in urban violent crime rates are due wholly or primarily to poverty or inequality.

## Race and Crime

"In the end," writes Silberman (1978:117), "there is no escaping the question of race and crime." The inescapable question to which Silberman refers concerns the possibility of a cultural component to black crime in the United States that is not fully reducible to structural deprivation or inequality. Silberman's (1978) discussion of race and crime leans heavily on the idea of a "violent black contraculture" advanced by Curtis (1975) to account for the high rates of criminal violence in cities with large black populations. The contraculture, which emphasizes physical toughness, sexual exploitation, shrewdness, and thrill-seeking arose and is sustained, Curtis argues, as an adaptation to racial oppression and economic marginality. However, in spite of its ultimate structural determinants, the contraculture promotes violent and aggressive responses among the young ghetto males who adhere to it more-or-less independently of variations in poverty or racial inequality. At the aggregate level of analysis, then, the violent contraculture thesis would predict the persistence of an association between a city's racial composition and violent-crime rates, after measures of racial deprivation and inequality are controlled.[8]

This proposition is examined in the present investigation. It should be noted that a recent study employing data and measures similar to those used here concludes that there is little or no evidence for theories of violent crime which posit a distinctive culture of violence among blacks (Blau & Blau, 1982). The researchers base their conclusion on the following generalization from their data: "... once inequalities and two other conditions [population size and percent divorced] are controlled, racial composition accounts for little additional variation" in rates of murder and assault among the 125 largest SMSAs (p. 126). In fact, however, the data presented by Blau and Blau do not support their conclusion. The effect of percent black on the murder rate ($\beta = .36$) is substantially larger than that of any other variable they examine, including measures of intraracial income inequality ($\beta = .22$) and inter-

[8]Curtis (1975) provides support for the use of racial composition as an aggregate-level indicator of violent contraculture. Noting "agglomeration effects" on the transmission of contraculture values in urban ghetto areas, he suggests that the size of the black population is an important demographic determinant of "contracultural takeoff" (p. 36). He goes on to propose multicity studies of race and violent crime which investigate "differential outcomes as a function of relevant population size, proportion, and the like" (p. 36).

TABLE 7.3. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination for Racial Composition, Controls, and Crime (N = 125)

| | Murder | Rape | Robbery | Assault | Burglary | Larceny | Motor vehicle theft |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POP | .05 | .17** | .62* | .13 | .16** | .13 | .41* |
| UNEM | −.14 | .05 | .07 | −.15 | .13 | .18 | .00 |
| RD | .22* | .45* | −.08 | .45* | .53* | .40* | .15 |
| BL | .55* | .06 | .37* | .22** | −.10 | −.17 | .01 |
| $R^2$ | .56 | .30 | .53 | .41 | .32 | .21 | .20 |

*Note.* POP = population size. UNEM = unemployment rate. RD = relative deprivation. BL = percent black. $*p < .01$. $**p < .05$.

racial inequality (β=.25). The effect of racial composition on the assault rate is also greater than those of the inequality measures (Blau & Blau, 1982, p. 124). The Blau's data, if not their conclusions, are consistent with Messner's (1983) findings for a larger sample of SMSAs.

The present study examines the contraculture thesis with the same methods and logic of analysis used by Messner (1983) and Blau and Blau (1982), but with a greater number and variety of racial-deprivation and inequality variables to serve as controls. The analysis proceeds by examining the effects of racial composition on urban crime rates controlling, first, for a general measure of relative deprivation (RD) and then for a series of measures of racial deprivation, discrimination, and inequality.

Table 7.3 shows the effect of percent black (BL)[9] on violent and property crime rates, controlling for relative deprivation (RD), population size (POP), and unemployment rate (UNEM), for the 125 SMSAs for which the requisite data were available. The data reveal significant racial effects on murder, robbery, and assault, no significant effects on property offenses, and no effect on rape. With the exception of the latter, these findings conform to the pattern expected on the basis of Curtis' violent contraculture thesis.

An alternative explanation of these findings from the structural perspective would hold that the relationship between race and violent crime is interpreted by racial deprivation. To investigate this possibility, three measures of racial deprivation were introduced into the analysis: the black poverty rate (BLPOV), median years of school completed by black family-heads (BLEDUC), and the black male unemployment rate

[9]Computed from data in U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973).

TABLE 7.4. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination for Racial Composition, Racial Deprivation, and Crime (N = 79)

| | Murder | Robbery | Assault |
|---|---|---|---|
| BLPOV | .08 | −.54* | .20 |
| BLEDUC | −.04 | .20 | .18 |
| BMUNEM | −.26* | .03 | −.19 |
| BL | .45* | .61* | .33** |
| $R^2$ | .46 | .31 | .19 |

*Note.* BLPOV = black poverty rate. BLEDUC = median years of school completed by black family-heads. BMUNEM = black male unemployment rate. BL = percent black.
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$.

(BMUNEM).[10] Table 7.4 shows the effects of racial composition on murder, robbery, and assault rates with these deprivation measures controlled. Significant racial effects remain in each case. Moreover, racial deprivation, at least as reflected in poverty, educational, and employment indicators, has surprisingly weak effects on crime rates. Strikingly, in the two instances where there is any significant deprivation effect at all, the effect is the *opposite* of that predicted by structural theory. High poverty and unemployment rates are associated with low robbery and murder rates, respectively.

A possible objection to the structural variables considered thus far is that they measure absolute deprivation, whereas previous research, as noted, has indicated a relationship between *inequality* and crime. However, similar results emerge when inequality measures are substituted for the deprivation variables. Table 7.5 displays the effects of racial composition on murder, robbery, and assault rates, controlling for three measures of racial inequality: (1) the difference between the median income of black families and the median income of all families in the SMSA (RACEGAP); (2) the black male unemployment rate divided by the total male unemployment rate (RACEUNEM); and (3) residential segregation by race (RACESEG).[11]

[10]From U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973) for the 79 SMSAs for which all requisite data were available.

[11]The income and unemployment measures were constructed from data from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1973). The segregation data are tract-based indexes of dissimilarity for SMSAs in 1970 (reported in Van Valey, Roof, & Wilcox, 1977). The analysis is based upon the 196 SMSAs for which all requisite data were available.

TABLE 7.5. Standardized Regression Coefficients and Coefficient of Determination for Racial Composition, Racial Inequality, and Crime (N = 196)

| | Murder | Robbery | Assault |
|---|---|---|---|
| RACESEG | .14* | .39* | .05 |
| RACEGAP | .06 | .01 | .02 |
| RACEUNEM | −.14* | −.08 | −.12** |
| BL | .66* | .29* | .51* |
| $R^2$ | .55 | .29 | .31 |

*Note.* RACESEG = residential segregation by race. RACEGAP = difference between the medium income of black families and the medium income of all families in the SMSA. RACEUNEM = the black male unemployment rate divided by the total male unemployment rate. BL = percent black.
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$.

Racial composition has significant effects on the three violent crimes, while the effects of the inequality variables are weaker and inconsistent. The dollar gap between blacks and whites has no independent influence on crime rates. Unemployment inequality has significant effects on murder and assault, however they are in the opposite direction of that predicted by structural theory. The performance of racial segregation is somewhat better. Indeed, of the six structural variables included in this analysis, segregation is the only one which shows significant and predictable effects on violent crime. Segregation is positively associated with rates of murder and robbery, although not with rates of assault. In no case, however, can it be said that the effect of race on crime is fully explained by racial segregation.

## Conclusions

The empirical results of the present study may be summarized as follows:

1. The investigation finds mixed support for the structural model of crime.
   a. There is substantial support for the propositions, derived from strain theory, that (i) crime rates are more strongly associated with inequality than with poverty, and (ii) the relationship between inequality and crime is maximized in the presence of high achievement aspirations.
   b. There is a weaker support for the control-related proposition that welfare dependency is positively associated with crime.
2. The investigation finds strong support for the cultural model of crime.

a. Regional effects on violent-crime rates persist after structural factors are controlled.
b. Racial effects on violent crime persist after structural factors, including measures of racial deprivation and inequality, are controlled.

The provisional nature of these findings bears repeating. They are intended to produce guidelines for further research and not firm conclusions regarding the complex interplay of culture, social structure, and crime. Additional research is required utilizing alternative measures of theoretical constructs and model specifications. The relative-deprivation measure employed in this study should be tested with different units of analysis (e.g., nation states) and on time-series as well as cross-sectional data. The difficult question of the *differential* effects of inequality on crime rates must also be tackled. All crimes are not affected equally by variations in the intensity and scope of deprivation among American cities. For example, robbery is apparently not affected at all. Why are robbery rates not responsive to variations in economic inequality when, say, rape and assault rates are? The problem here is not that relative deprivation was found to be associated with violent crime, for there is theory and research to support such a relationship, but that deprivation is associated with some violent offenses but not others.

Similar considerations apply to the investigation of control theory undertaken here. Control theory is not invalidated by a finding of weak effects of welfare dependency on crime, because dependency is only one of many plausible indicators of control. Subsequent investigations might, for example, include legal sanctions as indicators of formal social-control. They have been omitted from the present analysis primarily because of the difficulty of operationalizing system-response variables at the SMSA level.

Perhaps most important, we did not examine the possible indirect effects of welfare policy on crime. In so far as the effect of dependency operates through family dissolution, family variables should be incorporated in subsequent analyses, and indirect as well as direct effects on crime should be investigated. The effects, if any, of family dissolution are likely to be quite complex. A review of the relevant literature finds little evidence for a direct causal connection between "broken homes" and delinquency (Rosen & Neilson, 1978). The conventional assumption of a differential connection of broken homes with female delinquency has also been questioned and qualified (Datesman & Scarpitti, 1980). Harris' (1981) discussion of crime and welfare dependency, however, posits a mediating role for the family. As such, it is consistent with recent proposals to inject the family into theory, research, and policy aimed at the "underclass" (see Kelly, 1982). This approach conceives of the lower-class family as more-or-less capable of exercising "resource sharing/

acquisition" and "stress mediation" functions for its members. To the extent that these functions are maintained, the family protects members from the pathogenic effects of long-term economic deprivation (Kelly, 1982).

If, additionally, welfare dependency is argued to reduce labor-force participation among teenagers, participation and age variables should be investigated, and the connections among welfare, secondary labor markets, and crime clarified (see Myers, 1978). Finally, if, as Gilder (1981) implies and Harris (1981) states explicitly, welfare dependency produces high crime rates specifically among urban blacks, then racial composition needs to be included in future studies of welfare and crime, and race-welfare interaction effects explored.

The cultural model of violent crime was upheld, or at any rate could not be rejected, by this investigation. This does not mean that structural factors were found to be inconsequential in accounting for variation in rates of violent offenses. Table 7.3 shows that relative deprivation is significantly associated with rates of murder, assault, and rape when racial composition (a proxy measure of "violent contraculture") as well as other factors are controlled. Table 7.1 shows significant relative-deprivation effects for several violent and property offenses when regional location (a proxy for a Southern "subculture of violence") and other conditions are controlled. In the context of recent theory and research, however, what is significant about these findings is not the presence of structural effects, but the persistence of *cultural* effects with structural conditions controlled. In the face of studies such as Blau and Blau (1982), Loftin and Hill (1974), and Parker and Smith (1979), the finding, at the aggregate level, of any cultural effect at all is anomalous.

## Implications

A general problem for future research is to reconcile the differences between these and other findings obtained at different levels of analysis. The existence of violent subcultures has not been established in survey research on value orientations (see Ball-Rokeach, 1973), and, of course, investigators must be extremely cautious and tentative when inferring cultural causation from aggregate relationships. Part of the discrepancy in findings at different levels of analysis may well be conceptual in nature. Perhaps the essence of the violent subculture, like other delinquent subcultures, is not so much a held-in-common value preference for violence as a "shared misunderstanding" concerning the violent preferences of others (see Matza, 1964). Such an interpretation would link cultural and social-disorganization approaches to violent crime.

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