

NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME, DEPRESSION, AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

By

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This document is dedicated to my strong support system and to the selfless individuals who came before me and fought to make my academic opportunities a reality.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME, DEPRESSION, AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

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The amount of literature exploring the relationship between community crime, depression, and social disorganization is severely limited. Nonetheless, previous research on depression and crime, respectively, finds that areas low in collective efficacy and social cohesion are higher in residential depression and crime commission. The present study surveys attitudes on individual depression levels, neighborhood disorder/dissatisfaction, economic disadvantage, strain, and criminal involvement in order to determine the associational relationship between social disorganization, crime, and depression. Household income, gender, employment status, and race, among other sociodemographic variables, are included as control measures in analyses. Limitations and future research questions are addressed.

## CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Introduction**

Susan Smith. This name will forever resonate in the minds of Americans as a cold, sadistic killer. Suffering from post-partum depression, she drowned her two young children in a South Carolina river. Though the severity of her crime may seem extreme, Smith was rumored to have depression. But was she suffering from clinical depression and if so what did that have to do with her crime? Similar questions can be asked in response to such media reported cases. There are as yet no well-supported answers to such questions. Social science research has explored the relationship between depression and crime in relation to social factors (such as exposure to crime and financial strain). As this point it is not clear that depression does predispose one to commit crime, and it is not clear that depression is a high risk factor for crime. Explanations of the association between crime and depression are limited and more research is needed.

This research seeks to address social factors which may link criminality to depression. Due to limited research in the field, questions still remain about the relationship between social disorganization, crime, and depression. Are crime and depression related? Is social disorganization related to crime and depression, respectively? Do the negative effects of social disorganization, such as strain, explain the assumed relationship between crime and depression? Using social disorganization theory as a guide, this research seeks to bring an additional understanding of the relationship of crime to the violent ideations and aggressions some depressed individuals experience. Specific attention will be given to individual and community-level variables which may buffer, motivate, or contribute to depressive criminality. Based on social disorganization and strain theory, I expect the following to occur: crime and depression

will be positively related to one another, and I expect both to be positively related to social disorganization.

### **Social Disorganization Theory: An Overview**

Social disorganization theory has its roots in the twentieth century Chicago school of sociology. Since its inception, proponents of social disorganization theory have focused on neighborhood conditions of disadvantage, but the concept itself is defined as the inability of residents to maintain social control and order and deal with community problems. Social disorganization is the result of a decrease in the effect of social rules over the behavior of group members (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1920). Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) note that social disorganization is the result of a community being unable to resolve chronic issues. The prediction is that when social disorganization persists, residential strife, deviance, and crime occur.

Social disorganization results when there is an overabundance of disorder relative to order. Neighborhood characteristics of disorder include social traits (i.e., noise, population heterogeneity, high population density, broken families, and high residential mobility) in addition to physical traits (abandoned/decrepit buildings, graffiti, and litter) (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Skogan and Maxfield (1981) use the term perceived neighborhood disorder to denote negative conditions, whether criminal or non-criminal, which residents assume to be cues of social disorder.

Shaw & McKay (1942), credited for advancing social disorganization theory during its early years, provided three relevant theoretical constructs. Social order, they contended, required the following: community members to supervise and control teenage groups, local friendship networks to form, and residential participation in formal/voluntary organizations. Before elaborating on these constructs, it is first necessary to provide a historical sketch of Shaw &

McKay's theory. Their study, which assessed community problems in Chicago, included measures of crime, delinquency, truancy, and mental disorder. They found that areas with social problems also had low education levels, families on welfare, poor community organization, and low values for rental properties. What effect do Shaw & McKay's social order requirements have on reducing social order problems and minimizing levels of social disorganization?

Sampson & Groves (1989) argue that teenage group behavior, assumed to be unstable and prone to delinquency, can be positively shaped by residents in cohesive communities. Delinquency is primarily an act which occurs in group settings (Thrasher, 1963). Faris (1955) found that "the family normally derives important support in its tasks of guiding the behavior of children from the friends and neighbors, the primary group outside of the family itself. In an integrated community, these outside persons also by example reinforce the teachings of the parents. Furthermore, they constitute an important source of supervision, for children soon learnt that any misbehavior which is observed by neighbors is likely to be reported to parents" (p. 393). In this sense, responsibility falls not only on the parents/guardians of the teenagers, but is further extended to all members in the community. Order, then, is maintained by all members.

Secondly, local friendship networks must be established in order for community satisfaction to exist. When these networks are created, community members are more motivated to shield their neighbors. Faris (1955) argued that "persons involved in homogenous and unified social groups experience a satisfying confidence in the structure of mutual affection in the group" (p. 88). Furthermore, this construct lends support to the notion of residents assuming responsibility for what occurs in their communities and preventing victimization from outsiders. Sampson & Groves (1989) contend that participation in formal or voluntary organizations is key to preserving community social order. Examples of such organizations, in modern-day society,

include local police task forces or community “Crime Watch” programs. Partnerships between these institutions, it is assumed, will positively contribute to residential safety. Previous research (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson & Groves, 1989) noted that when links between community institutions are weak, a community’s ability to defend its interests is compromised. In essence, voluntary organizations/associations and social networks may act as buffers that counteract risk factors for crime and increase cohesiveness among concerned residents seeking to improve their communities.

What can explain the variances in disorganization levels between communities? What factors impede social order? Sampson & Groves found four factors associated with varying levels of social disorganization: socioeconomic status, residential mobility, family disruption, and urbanization. Silver (2000), in his study of violence among the mentally ill, had similar findings--social disorganization accounted for the effect of community-level socioeconomic status, residential stability, and family disruption (relative to personal and property victimization). Communities with residents of low economic status often lack money and resources, which can cause elevated levels of stress and strain. There is a strong association between neighborhood disadvantage and low-income individuals (Ross, 2000; Beardman et al., 2001). Additionally, low socioeconomic status communities are less equipped to control and supervise youth groups, compared to high socioeconomic status communities (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Having high levels of residential mobility can disrupt a community’s network of social support and relations (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Ross, Reynolds, & Geis, 2000). According to social disorganization theory, “low residential turnover increases the likelihood that neighbors will know each other, share values, and exert informal social control (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Bursik (1988) purports that families are less likely to form and participate in community-

based organizations if they plan to relocate at the first opportunity. Family disruption, or deviation from the ideal two-parent household structure, acts to decrease informal social controls and reduces guardianship in the community. As cities expand and become more industrialized, urbanization threatens to weaken local friendship networks and disengage residents from participating in local affairs (similar to that of residential mobility). Compared to the conventional community structure, where “there is a network of cooperation between the children who play together and their parents, such a social structure is lacking in the most urban regions” (Faris, 1955, p. 416).

Previous literature characterizes community social order as a mix of friendship and loyalty among residents. Kasarda & Janowitz (1974) call this the systemic model, whereby a community is viewed as a unit of formal and informal ties rooted in family life and socialization. An element central to understanding the systemic model is the notion of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is the term used to denote a “willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good” (Sampson et al., 1997, p. 918). Collective efficacy, in short, is the sense of the residents that they can trust one another to intervene and exercise informal social control over trouble and problems that may occur in the neighborhood, and contribute to the community’s upkeep and preservation of social order (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Wells et al., 2006).

### **General Strain Theory: An Overview**

Strain is the result of negative life events occur or aversive relationships between individuals. Exogenous sources of strain include elements of social disorganization such as negative neighborhood conditions, violent victimization, and stressful life experiences. Agnew (1992), credited for addressing strain and delinquency in his general strain theory (GST), cites three causal factors of strain: the failure to achieve positively valued stimuli or goals; the

removal of positively valued stimuli or goals; presence of negative stimuli. GST lays the foundation for a social disorganization-crime-depression relationship through its three main tenets: exposure to strain increases delinquency; when negative factors are present (given exposure to strain), delinquent responses are more likely to occur; delinquent responses are more likely to occur when strain exposure leads to anger. Mazerolle et al. (2003) contend that individuals may seek adaptive mechanisms such as crime and delinquency to cope with anger. Hoffmann & Miller (1998), on the other hand, argue that high self-efficacy, high self-esteem, and modeling positive peer behavior serve as positive coping strategies. Individuals with high self-efficacy attribute their successes and failures to personal attributes rather than external agents, such as the federal government. High self-esteem, it is argued, acts a preventive shield to limit engagement in delinquent activities and increase one's resilience to strain. Modeling positive peer behavior is instrumental, they contend, because peers can remind one another of adverse consequences (as a result of delinquent behavior) and peers can serve as role models.

### **Exploring the Social Disorganization-Crime Relationship**

As previously noted, factors such as presence of graffiti in public places and low socioeconomic status can increase levels of stress and contribute to social disorganization. Social disorganization scholars point to the preventive and central effects of social support and collective efficacy in exploring the motivating factors of criminality. Social support, which is generally defined as informal ties with one's neighbors, is crucial in mitigating the strain associated with disadvantage. Cullen (1994) stated that "the more social support in a person's social network, the less crime will occur" (p. 540). Silver (2000) contends that anger, substance abuse<sup>1</sup>, and lack of social support (which are all indicative of social disorder) are proximate risk

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<sup>1</sup> Silver & Teasdale (2005) found that individuals with substance abuse disorder also exhibited the highest rates of violence.

factors for violence<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, having strong social support was found to buffer residential fear of crime and distrust (Ross & Jang, 2000). When fear of crime<sup>3</sup> is widespread in communities, residents are less likely to engage in programs and activities which reduce disorder and criminality. Without the mediating effects of collective efficacy, crime is fostered. Collective efficacy has often been cited to help explain differential crime rates across communities (Sampson et al., 1997). The term evokes a feeling of responsibility among residents to intervene in community affairs through informal measures. Such efforts include street surveillance and direct intervention in problems (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). Based on previous research, the qualitative effects of informal control were found to be significant. Residential interventions may be effective for delinquent groups/perpetrators since they do not carry the same negative stigmas as do more formalized means (such as police intervention or incarceration). In fact, collective efficacy was found to be more instrumental in crime prevention than was intervention by authorities--neighborhoods with disadvantage levels are less likely to secure law enforcement resources and protection (Sampson, 1997; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003).

A considerable volume of literature has been devoted to exploring the effects of disorganization on neighborhood crime. Social disorganization theory notes that local ties and informal control limit the effects of economic disadvantage, residential instability<sup>4</sup>, and other factors on neighborhood crime (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). Previous studies suggest that crime rates are related to neighborhood ties, informal social control, and residential interaction (Warner

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<sup>2</sup> Silver (2002), in a similar study, examined the role of social relationships in mediating victimization among the mentally ill. Silver posits that because the mentally ill are more likely to have unstable, conflicted relationships with neighbors, they are at a greater risk of being victimized. This finding suggests a shielding or deterrent value of social support.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor (1996) posits that neighborhood attachment levels will decrease when residents view disorder or crime. He notes an opposite effect when residential exposure to crime is low.

<sup>4</sup> Osgood & Chambers (2003) found residential instability to be associated with increased rates of rape, simple and aggravated assault, weapons violations, and the overall crime index.

& Rountree, 1998; Rountree & Warner, 1999; Veysey & Messner, 1999; Bellair, 1997; Elliot et al., 1996; Sampson et al., 1997; Hirschfield & Bowers, 1997). In their case study, Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush (2001) looked at predictive factors of neighborhood homicide in Chicago for the 1996 – 1998 period. To gauge actual and perceived neighborhood violence rates, the authors used official data from the 1990 Census and responses from a 1995 survey distributed to local residents (n= 8,872). Their findings provided support for a link between collective efficacy and criminality. For example, 72% of neighborhoods having high levels of collective efficacy experienced low levels of homicide. Additionally, 75% of areas defined as homicide “hot spots” had low levels of collective efficacy. This study found that concentrated disadvantage and low collective efficacy, independent of one another, predict increased homicide levels. Nevertheless, involvement in local organizations or voluntary associations increased levels of collective efficacy in achieving social control and residential cohesion. Nash and Bowen (1999) assessed social capital, demographics, and residential perception of crime among a national sample of middle and high school adolescents using the School Success Profile (SSP) instrument (n= 1,796) to determine factors which influence perception of crime. Nash and Bowen hypothesized that when participants perceived high levels of crime, they were also less likely to see their peers as involved in prosocial activities. Results from the study showed that for middle and high school students, a significant relationship was found between perceived informal social control and perceived neighborhood crime, even after control variables were added<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, as perception of informal social control increased, participants perceived less crime in the neighborhood. Perceived informal social control had a negative effect on

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<sup>5</sup>Control variables included race, sex, and socioeconomic status.

perceived neighborhood crime<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, as perceptions of high neighborhood socioeconomic status<sup>7</sup> increased, lower neighborhood crime levels were perceived. Nash and Bowen purport that “at the macro level, community organization and political action are needed to reduce neighborhood crime and its correlates, such as poverty and economic dislocation” (p. 183). At the micro level, “social workers can collaborate with adolescents and their families to reduce exposure to crime even in communities with high crime rates” (p. 183). Collective efficacy of community agencies and social agents can minimize neighborhood crime rates. Paxton et al. (2004), in a similar study, found that among adolescents, poverty, discrimination, and low education/employment opportunities contribute to the risk for witnessing and experiencing violence.

### **Exploring the Social Disorganization-Depression Relationship**

Social disorganization theory has been used to explain the neighborhood context of depression and other mental disorders (Silver, Mulvey, & Swanson, 2002). Hiday (1997) suggests that “neurobiological factors may be the origin of severe of mental illness, but social factors affect its course, manifestations, and connections to violence” (p. 412). Exposure to stressful events shapes depressive problems among adolescents (Colten & Gore, 1991; Compass and Wagner, 1991). Structural and psychological factors which affect individual depression include living in an urban area, having disadvantaged economic status, experiencing stressful life events, and having weak social relationships (De Coster, 2003).

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<sup>6</sup> Perceived neighborhood crime has a significantly negative effect on the perceived prosocial behavior of adolescents.

<sup>7</sup> Bursik & Grasmick (1993) posit that areas with low socioeconomic status also have greater rates of residential mobility and ethnic heterogeneity. These factors lead to weak social control systems and high rates of crime and delinquency.

Ross (2000) examined the assumed disadvantage-depression relationship among Illinois residents using the Community, Crime, and Health (CCH) survey (n= 2,482)<sup>8</sup>. Previous studies, she noted, found depression levels to be higher among individuals with low education, low income, and the unemployed. Based on this, she hypothesized that residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods exhibited higher rates of depression (compared to more “advantaged” neighborhoods) and neighborhood disorder further accounted for the association between depression and disadvantage. Physical malaise (inclusive of having trouble sleeping and/or concentrating) and feelings of sadness were indicative of depression in this study. Respondents provided answers to questions assessing prior criminality and community satisfaction. After recoding responses, Ross found that poverty and single-mother households were the only indicators of neighborhood disadvantage significantly associated with depression. As a result, individuals who live in these disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to have poor mental health. Additionally, Ross found that residents who drink heavily or engage in illegal activities had significantly higher levels of depression than those who did not. Sociodemographic variables not found to be associated with depression include the following: education level in neighborhood, homeownership, racial/ethnic composition, and residential stability.

As previously noted, perceived neighborhood disorder has a strong effect on social cohesion<sup>9</sup>. Subsequently, due to strain and a lack of social support, depression may ensue. An inverse relationship exists between social cohesion and depression. Depression is lowest when people in a neighborhood know each other (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1996). Empirical research lends support to a disorganization-depression relationship. Latkin & Curry (2003) noted a strong

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<sup>8</sup> Depression is also high among residents who are minorities, women, and individuals who are unmarried.

<sup>9</sup> Perceived neighborhood disorder has a stronger association to an individual’s mental health status than does official measures of neighborhood characteristics (Hadley-Ives et al., 2000).

association existed between perceived neighborhood decay and depression (even after controlling for baseline depressive symptoms). In a study of adolescent students, Stevenson (1989) found a relationship between low levels of depressive symptoms and strong feelings of neighborhood safety. Aneshensel & Sucoff (1996), in a similar study of adolescents, found that the more threatening a neighborhood is perceived to be, the more common the symptoms of anxiety and depression. On the other hand, students who identified their neighborhoods as having low social capital also reported high levels of depressive symptoms. Silver (2000) pointed to low socioeconomic status to explain the social disorganization-depression relationship, finding that “environmental adversity” facilitates mental disorders<sup>10</sup>. He adds that the inability of some mentally ill individuals to function in a normal setting reduces the likelihood of forming long-lasting, extensive social networks.

### **Exploring the Crime-Depression Relationship**

Research on crime and depression is severely limited in number. Of the literature available, specific attention is focused on individual/community criminal law violations and depression levels. Rosenbaum (1991) found that in intimate partner homicides, 75% of the perpetrators were depressed. De Coster (2003) proposed a link between law violation and depression. De Coster contends that there are three sequential mechanisms which lead to law violation and depression. First, social-structural positions, including living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, which may expose youths to stressful life events, can lead to law violation and symptoms of depression. In turn, deviant responses to stressful life events shape

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<sup>10</sup> The study also finds that patients discharged into disadvantaged neighborhoods were significantly more likely to engage in violence than a comparative group discharged into less disadvantaged neighborhoods.

social relationships with conventional norms and deviance. Relationships formed<sup>11</sup> may “ultimately influence law violation and depression” (p. 130). Paxton et al. (2004) found that exposure to crime is linked to anxiety and depression, perhaps suggesting a causal relationship. De Coster & Heimer (2001) found that delinquent adolescents were more likely to become depressed in early adulthood, noted by a significant effect of delinquency on adulthood depression.

Though few studies have directly explored the relationship between crime and depression, several studies (Dollfus et al., 1993; Sax et al., 1996; Lancon et al., 2001) found that depressive symptoms are also components of schizophrenia, though the frequency of depressive symptoms varies based on the stage of schizophrenia. Swanson et al. (1990), using data from the Epidemiological Catchment Area’s five study sites, analyzed the relationship between violence and psychiatric disorder (n= 10,059). Based on the relationship between depression and schizophrenia, their results add support to a crime-depression hypothesis, finding that those with schizophrenia were more violent than those without. Individuals with schizophrenia alone, for example, were found to be more violent than those without (8% violence rate compared to 2% violence rate)<sup>12</sup>. When substance abuse, (Ross, 2000), was factored in, the violence rate among schizophrenics jumped to 30%. Though the causative effects of schizophrenia cannot be deduced from this study, it does show the compounding effect of substance abuse on schizophrenic criminality. In a cross-sectional study, Steadman et al. (1998) looked at the effect substance abuse has on the relationship between mental disorder and violence. Their study

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<sup>11</sup> These social relationships shape elements of role taking, including reflected appraisals, modes of deviance, and reactions to deviance.

<sup>12</sup> Though 92% of schizophrenic participants in Swanson et al. (1990) were presumably non-violent, the percentage of schizophrenics who engage in crime was still slightly greater than participants in the control group. In a related study, Silver and Teasdale (2005) found mental disorders and violence to be significantly related.

measured rates of violence among individuals age 18 to 40 during their first year of discharge from a mental institution (n = 1,136)<sup>13</sup>. Their results showed substance abuse significantly raised the prevalence rate of violence in mental disorder populations. Based on the relationship between the underlying components of depression and schizophrenia, it is plausible to assume that substance abuse may incite aggressive or violent behavior in depressed individuals.

In recent years, a small body of research has examined the relationship between social disorganization, crime, and depression. Previous violence, substance abuse, psychopathy, relationship instability, personality disorder, anger, and lack of social support were all found to increase the chance of an individual engaging in violence or being victimized (Silver, 2000). Silver (2002), in a study of psychiatric patients from the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC) in Pittsburgh, noted that discharged patients were more likely to engage in violence than those without a psychotic diagnosis<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, even after controlling for individual and community-level correlates, individuals with psychotic diagnoses were more likely to be victims of violence (compared to non-psychotic individuals).

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<sup>13</sup> Researchers gathered data from self-report surveys, informants, and official police reports. The study monitored violence to others every ten weeks following discharge from one of three mental institutions.

<sup>14</sup> Ross (2000) found that individuals who engage in criminal activities are more depressed than those who do not.

## CHAPTER 2 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### **Sample**

This research study is a secondary analysis of data taken from Ross & Britt's Community, Crime, and Health (CCH) survey (1995, 1998). Data were retrieved using the University of Michigan's Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) database. The Community, Crime, and Health survey was administered to adults aged 18 and older in select Illinois households (n= 2, 482) to determine the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and physical/mental health. Participants were contacted via telephone by a random-digit dialing method which increases the rate of contacting home phone numbers (as opposed to disconnected or business phone numbers). Up to 10 calls were initially made to select and contact a respondent; up to a maximum of ten follow-up calls were made to complete the interview. The adult in the household with the most recent birthday was selected as the respondent. This survey had a 73.1% response rate. Demographic information for respondents is as follows: 1) English speaking adults; 2) minimum age of 18 (maximum of 92); 3) mean age is 42 years; 4) mean education is 13.8 years (indicating some degree of advanced training or higher education); 5) mean income is \$48,274, 6) 41% of respondents are male; 7) 84.1% of respondents are White; 8) 53.3% of respondents are married. Descriptive statistics for all variables (with recoded variable names in parentheses) are shown in Table 2-1.

### **Dependent Variables**

The two dependent variables used for analysis purposes are "depression" (DEPRESSION) and "self-reported crime" (CRIMINALACTIVITY).

DEPRESSION represents summed responses to Ross' (2000) 7-item modification of the Center for Epidemiological Studies' Depression (CES-D) scale. Previous literature defines

depression as continued feelings of despair and lethargy that goes beyond the ordinary and temporary feelings of melancholy or the “blues”. To gauge depression levels, respondents were asked “On how many days in the past week have you: 1) had trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?; 2) felt you just couldn’t get going?; 3) had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing?; 4) felt that everything was an effort?; 5) felt sad?; 6) felt lonely?; 7) felt you couldn’t shake the blues?”. Responses were coded from 0 (No depression) to 7 (High depression). For analysis purposes, “No Coded Response”, “Don’t Know”, and “Refused/Missing” responses were recoded as “System Missing” for all 7 items. The resident depression scale has an alpha reliability of .783.

CRIMINALACTIVITY represents summed self-report measures of criminal activity using measures of self-reported crime. To gauge respondent criminality, respondents were asked “In the past twelve months, have you 1) done anything that would have gotten you in trouble if the police had been around/done anything illegal?; 2) been caught in a minor violation of the law?; 3) been arrested?; 4) been in jail for more than 24 hours?”. Responses were recoded as “0” (No) and “1” (Yes). For analysis purposes, “No Coded Response”, “Don’t Know”, and “Refused/Missing” responses were recoded as “System Missing” for all 4 items. These activities form an additive scale indicative of increasing trouble with the law. The scale has a low alpha reliability of .330. Nonetheless, I have retained this measure of criminal activities. Interpretation of findings must keep this low scale reliability in mind. The self-reported criminal activity scale has an alpha reliability of .330.

### **Independent Variables**

Independent measures of interest deal with a variety of factors comprising neighborhood disorganization. For analysis purposes, disorganization is broken down into two variables,

perceived neighborhood disorganization (PERCEIVEDDISOR) and reported financial disadvantage (ECONDIS).

PERCEIVEDDISOR represents summed responses to the 15-item Ross-Mirowsky Perceived Neighborhood Disorder Scale (1999) (see Table 2-2). Neighborhood disorder “refers to conditions and activities, both major and minor, criminal and non-criminal, that residents perceive to be signs of the breakdown of social order (Ross, 2000, p.181). To gauge perceived disorder levels, respondents were asked to answer the following 15 items: 1) “There is a lot of graffiti in my neighborhood”; 2) “My neighborhood is noisy”; 3) “Vandalism is common in my neighborhood” 4) “There are a lot of abandoned buildings in my neighborhood”; 5) “My neighborhood is clean”; 6) “People in my neighborhood take good care of their houses and apartments”; 7) “There are too many people hanging around on the streets near my home”; 8) “There is a lot of crime in my neighborhood”; 9) “There is too much drug use in my neighborhood”; 10) “There is too much alcohol use in my neighborhood”; 11) “I’m always having trouble with my neighbors”; 12) “In my neighborhood, people watch out for each other”; 13) “The police protection in my neighborhood is adequate”; 14) “The people in my neighborhood trust one another”; 15) “My neighborhood is safe”. Items 1-4 are indicators of physical disorder. Items 5-6 are indicators of physical order. Items 7-11 are indicators of social disorder. Items 12-15 are indicators of social order. Collectively, items 1-4 and 7-11 form an index variable of disorder (DISORDER). Items 5-6 and 12-15 form an index variable of order (ORDER). Disorder items are coded in Likert scale form as strongly disagree (1); disagree (2); agree (3); strongly agree (4). Order items are reverse coded in Likert scale form as strongly agree (1); agree (2); disagree (3); strongly disagree (4). For analysis purposes, “No Coded Response”, “Don’t Know”, and “Refused/Missing” responses were recoded as “System Missing”

for all 3 items. The Ross-Mirowsky scale has a high alpha reliability of .919 based on the original sample of 2,482 respondents (see Table 2-2).

ECONDIS represents summed responses to a 3-item economic disadvantage scale used to represent financial strain. Respondents were asked “In the past twelve months have you: 1) not had enough money to buy food and other household necessities?; 2) not had enough money to pay for medical care?; 3) not had enough money to pay for bills?”. Responses were coded as very often (1); fairly often (2); not very often (3); never (4). For analysis purposes, “No Coded Response”, “Don’t Know”, and “Refused/Missing” responses were recoded as “System Missing” for all 3 items. The financial strain scale has an alpha reliability of .809.

### **Control Variables**

Several demographic control variables were selected as control variables for regression models. These variables include gender (GENDER), recoded as “0” for male and “1” for female; respondent employment status (EMPLOY), coded as “0” for full-time employment and “1” for non full-time employment; spouse employment status (SPOUSEEMP) coded as “0” for full-time employment and “1” for non full-time employment; racial background (RACE) coded as “0” for White and “1” for non-White; annual family household income (in dollars) in 1997 (INCOME) coded as “0” for \$30,000 or more and “1” for less than \$30,000; respondent is of Hispanic/Spanish origin (HISPANICS) coded as “0” for no or “1” for yes. For analysis purposes, “Something Else”, “No Coded Response”, “Don’t Know”, and “Refused/Missing” responses were recoded as “System Missing” for all 6 items.

### **Analytic Plan**

The objective of this research is to examine the relationships between social disorganization, crime, and depression. The assumption is that both criminal behavior and depression are responses to strain (unmeasured in this study) resulting from living in socially

disorganized neighborhoods (see Figure 2-1). Due to the limitations of the data set the causal implications of this underlying assumption or in Figure 2-1 are not tested. Rather the present analysis simply examines the bivariate and multivariate relationships between measures of crime and depression as dependent variables and measures of social disorganization as independent variables. Present analyses use perceived neighborhood disorder (PERCEIVEDDISOR) and economic disadvantage (ECONDIS) as indicators of social disorganization. Using the dependent variable for self-reported criminal activity (CRIMINALACTIVITY) and independent variable for perceived neighborhood disorder, (PERCEIVEDDISOR), which include items assessing perceptions of crime and deviance in the neighborhood, may present confounding or tautological analysis issues, but the perception of crime is not the same as reporting one's own offenses and the measure is necessary to explore the relationship between crime and depression. SPSS statistical software will be used to perform all analyses. Due to the multiple category composition of dependent and independent variables used in analyses, crosstabular examinations will not be performed. Nonetheless, bivariate correlation analyses will be conducted on the dependent (depression (DEPRESSION), self-reported criminal activity (CRIMINALACTIVITY)) and independent (economic disadvantage (ECONDIS), and perceived neighborhood disorder (PERCEIVEDDISOR)) variables to address the proposed associational relationship between variables. To address the proposed relationships between social disorganization and crime and social disorganization and depression, respectively, multivariate OLS regression analyses will be performed to determine the relationship between the selected dependent variable and independent variables and to test for multicollinearity. Demographic control variables will also be introduced into the analyses. That is models will be run first with depression as the dependent and perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage as

the independent variables; then with self-reported criminal activity as the dependent variable and perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage as the independent variables. To address the low reliability of the self-reported criminal activity scale (CRIMINALACTIVITY), separate models will be run with indicators of self-reported criminal activity (ILLEGALREC, MINVIOLREC, ARRESTEREC, and JAILREC, respectively) as the dependent variables and neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage as the independent variables. Control variables will then be added as a block to each regression analysis. If the main and net effects of social disorganization on depression and crime are in the expected direction of higher crime and depression associated with higher social disorganization and are greater than the main and net effects of depression and crime on each other, the main hypothesis of the study will be supported. Also, the expected relationship between crime and depression is positive; higher levels of depression are expected to be associated with higher criminal activity. If not, then appropriate conclusions about the theoretical model and future research will be drawn.

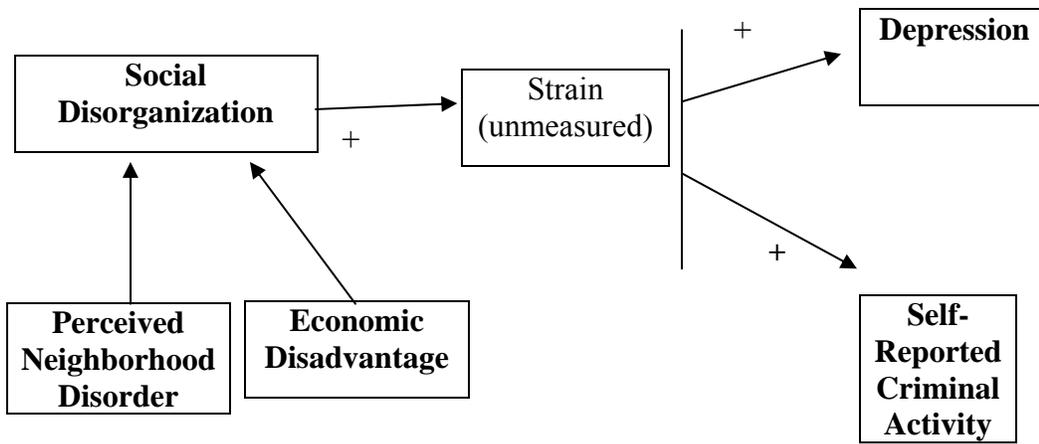


Figure 2-1. Theoretical Model

Table 2-1. Descriptive Variable Statistics

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Alpha
<i>Dependent Variables</i>					
<i>Depression Scale s (DEPRESSION)- # days</i>					.783
Had trouble sleeping (SLEEPREC)	0	7	1.03	2.003	
Had trouble getting going (GETGOREC)	0	7	0.70	1.589	
Had trouble keeping focused (MINDREC)	0	7	0.65	1.575	
Felt everything was an effort (EFFORTREC)	0	7	0.51	1.483	
Felt sad (SADREC)	0	7	0.71	1.496	
Felt lonely (LONELYREC)	0	7	0.48	1.416	
Felt could not shake blues (BLUESREC)	0	7	0.29	1.083	
<i>Criminal Activity Scale (CRIMINALACTIVITY)- "0" no; "1" yes</i>					.330
Done Something Illegal/ to Cause Trouble (ILLEGREC)	0	1	0.03	0.171	
Caught in Minor Violation (MINVIOLREC)	0	1	0.02	0.146	
Been Arrested (ARRESTEREC)	0	1	0.00	0.057	
Been In Jail More Than 24 Hours (JAILREC)	0	1	0.00	0.000	
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
<i>Perceived Neighborhood Disorder Scale (PERCEIVEDDISOR)</i>					.919
Graffiti in neighborhood (GRAFFITIREC)	1	4	1.56	0.609	
Neighborhood is noisy (NOISYREC)	1	4	1.80	0.700	
Neighborhood vandalism common (VANDALSREC)	1	4	1.67	0.616	
Abandoned buildings present (ADBANBLDREC)	1	4	1.51	0.574	
Too much alcohol use (ALCOHOLUSREC)	1	4	1.90	0.715	
Too much hanging out on streets (HANGOUTREC)	1	4	1.70	0.699	
Too much drug use (DRUGUSEREC)	1	4	1.80	0.723	
A lot of crime in neighborhood (CRIMEREC)	1	4	1.68	0.643	
Neighborhood is clean (CLEANREC)	1	4	1.68	0.562	
Neighbors take care of homes (CAREHOMREC)	1	4	1.64	0.562	
Neighborhood is safe (SAFEREC)	1	4	1.68	0.632	
Watch out for One Another (WATCHOUREC)	1	4	1.77	0.645	
Adequate Police Protection (POLICEREC)	1	4	1.83	0.639	
Trust Neighbors (NEITRUSREC)	1	4	1.77	0.614	
<i>Economic Disadvantage Scale (ECONDIS)- "1" SD; "4" SA<sup>1</sup></i>					.809
Trouble Buying Food (STRNFOOREC)	1	4	3.78	0.558	
Trouble Paying for Medical Care (STRNMEDREC)	1	4	3.81	0.552	
Trouble Paying Bills (STRNBILLREC)	1	4	3.58	0.750	
<i>Control Variables</i>					
Respondent Gender (Female = 1) (GENDER)	0	1	0.60	0.491	
Hispanic/Spanish Ethnicity (Yes = 1) (HISPANICS)	0	1	0.01	0.109	
Spouse Employ (Non Full-time = 1) (SPOUSEEMP)	0	1	0.39	0.489	
Respondent Race (Non-White = 1) (RACE)	0	1	0.34	0.474	

<sup>1</sup> A score of 1 indicates "strongly disagree", 2 indicates "disagree", 3 indicates "agree" and 4 indicates "strongly agree". This is a reverse coding so that 1 equals lowest economic disadvantage and 4 equals highest economic disadvantage. For perceived neighborhood disorder items have been direct coded or reversed coded as needed so that 1 equals lowest neighborhood disorder and 4 equals highest neighborhood disorder.

Table 2-1 Continued.

	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<i>Control Variables</i>					
Respondent Employ (Non Full-time = 1) (EMPLOY)	0	1	0.44	0.496	
Total Household Income ( $\leq$ than \$30,000 = 1) (INCOME)	0	1	0.34	0.474	

Table 2-2. Ross-Mirowsky Perceived Neighborhood Disorder Scale Reliability

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Valid	1332	53.7
Excluded	1150	46.3
Total	2482	100.0
Total Items	15	
Alpha Reliability	.919	

## CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

The first section of analysis examines the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Bivariate correlation analysis (using pairwise deletion) was conducted to determine the strength of association between depression, self-reported criminal activity, perceived neighborhood disorder, and economic disadvantage. Based on previous studies (Ross, 2000), the perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage scales, as independent variables, were used as indicators of social disorganization. Correlation analysis yielded several important results, though some were non-significant. A positive relationship was found between self-reported criminal activity and economic disadvantage ( $p \leq .01$ ), which is consistent with previous literature showing and the expectations from the theoretical framework of this study. A positive relationship also existed between economic disadvantage and perceived neighborhood disorder ( $p \leq .01$ ), which is further supported by the literature. Alternately, the correlation analysis yielded several results which are not in the expected direction. Correlation analysis showed a negative, rather than the expected positive, relationship between economic disadvantage and depression. Additionally, a negative relationship was found between self-reported criminal activity and depression ( $p \leq .01$ ). Though not significant, negative relationships were found between the following: self-reported criminal activity and perceived neighborhood disorder; depression and perceived neighborhood disorder. These findings offer partial support for the theoretical model, but do not support social disorganization theory, which expects a positive relationship between social disorganization and crime and social disorganization and depression. Furthermore, while research on crime and depression in the past has shown a positive relationship between the two variables, the findings here are that, contrary to expectations, the two are negatively related. Results for correlation analysis are shown in Table 3-1. All findings

are reported with the caveat that criminal activity is positively and significantly related to economic disadvantage (as expected), but negatively related to perceived neighborhood disorder (though this finding was not significant).

The next section of the analysis examines the effects of social disorganization indicators (neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage) on depression and criminal activity levels, respectively. It is important to note that a considerable number of participants (N= 685) participants did not answer questions gaging household income. This finding may alter the overall results in regression analysis. Multiple regression analyses were performed for each dependent variable (depression, self-reported criminal activity, trouble with the law/illegal activity, minor law violation, ever been arrested, and been jailed for more than 24 hours, respectively) using the same independent and control variables: economic disadvantage, perceived neighborhood disorder, gender, respondent employment status, spouse employment status, respondent race, total household income, and Hispanic/Spanish ethnicity. Despite dummy coding all control variables, an assumed statistical error message indicating that the variable HISPANICS was a constant, resulted in SPSS removing the variable indicating Hispanic/Spanish ethnicity from all regression analyses. This finding remained even after replacing the recoded variable HISPANICS with the original variable (HISPANI2) from the CCH dataset. Similarly, the same error occurred when ARRESTEREC and JAILREC, respectively, were used as dependent variables, thus eliminating the dependent variables from regression analyses. This may possibly suggest an error in entering variable data into the dataset. Additionally, although the Ross-Mirowsky scale has a high reliability, nearly half of participant responses (n = 2,482) were removed during scale reliability analysis. After running a frequency analysis, it was determined that the responses removed were recoded as system-missing due to “no coded”,

“system missing”, or “don’t know” responses. These are fewer missing cases than found when listwise deletion is used, but even with pairwise deletion the number of system missing cases is large and findings must be viewed with this in mind.

The first OLS multiple regression analysis estimated the effects of perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage on resident depression. Model 1 shows perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage account for 1.2% of the variation in depression levels. ANOVA results suggest that findings are likely to be obtained by chance ( $F = .639, p = .530$ ). Additionally, the model parameter showed that as perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage decreased, respectively, depression levels increased, thus a negative (though not significant) relationship existed between the dependent variable (depression) and the independent variables (perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage). This finding does not support this study’s hypothesis nor a large volume of research on social disorganization theory. Model 2 introduced control variables in the analysis. Independent and control variables present account for 5.7% of the variation in depression levels. ANOVA results for Model 2 were similar to Model 1, suggesting a strong likelihood that outcomes may be obtained by chance ( $F = .852, p = .549$ ). Model parameter results indicated that as economic disadvantage and perceived neighborhood disorder decreased, respectively, depression levels increased. The control variable gender (GENDER) was significant in the model ( $p \leq .05$ ). Based on relatively low eigenvalues and high condition indexes for the analysis, collinearity issues may also be present. Results are presented in Tables 3-2 through 3-4 and parameter estimates are presented in Table A-1.

The second OLS regression estimated the effects of perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage on self-reported criminal activity. Model 1 shows perceived

neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage accounted for 5.3% of the variation in self-reported criminal activity levels. ANOVA results suggest outcome results may likely be obtained by chance ( $F= 2.905$ ,  $p = .059$ ). Model parameter results indicated that as perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage, respectively, decreased, self-reported criminal activity levels increased. These findings are not consistent with previous literature, which predicts a positive relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. Independent variable economic disadvantage (ECONDIS) was significant in the model ( $p \leq .05$ ). Model 2 introduced control variables into the regression analysis. Independent and control variables accounted for 12.2% of variation in self-reported criminal activity levels. As with other models, a low F-value indicated that outcomes are likely to be obtained by chance ( $F= 1.964$ ,  $p= .068$ ). Model 2, in essence, did not increase the predictability of the regression analysis. Model parameter outcomes showed that as perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage levels decreased, respectively, self-reported criminal activity levels increased, which does not support previous literature. As with Model 1, economic disadvantage was significant in Model 2 and in the expected direction as well. Independent variable economic disadvantage (ECONDIS) and control variable spouse employment status (SPOUSEEMP) were significant in the model ( $p \leq .05$  for both outcomes). A low eigenvalue and high condition index values for Model 1 and Model 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> dimensions, respectively) are indicative of multicollinearity. Results are presented in Tables 3-5 through 3-7 and parameter estimates are presented in Table A-2.

The third regression analysis estimated the effects of perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage on having trouble with the law/doing something illegal. ILLEGREC, which represents having trouble with the law, is included the scale variable

CRIMINALACTIVITY. Due to the low alpha reliability of the scale, ILLEGREC was entered to indicate an individual having committed an illegal act or having any punitive interaction with the law. Model 1 shows perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage accounted for 7.6% of variation in trouble with the law levels. Significant ANOVA results indicate that it is unlikely that Model 1 outcomes were obtained by chance ( $F= 4.29, p \leq .05$ ). Model parameter results indicated that as economic disadvantage levels decrease, trouble with the law/illegal activity levels will increase, which contradicts literature on social disorganization theory. This contrasts with the findings in Table 3-1 in which economic disadvantage is positively related to levels of criminal activity when measured as a scale. Alternately, as perceived neighborhood disorder levels increased, trouble with the law/illegal activity levels increased, again as contrasted with the direction of relationship between perceived neighborhood disorder and the scale of criminal activity. These differences may reflect problems with the low reliability of the scale. Independent variable perceived neighborhood disorder was significant in the model ( $p \leq .01$ ). Model 2 showed perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage account for 13.6% of variation in trouble with the law/illegal activity outcomes. As with Model 1, significant ANOVA results indicate a strong likelihood that outcomes were not obtained by chance. Model parameter results showed that as economic disadvantage levels increased, trouble with the law/illegal activity levels increased, which is consistent with previous literature and the expectations of the theoretical model. Similarly, consistent with previous literature and social disorganization theory, as perceived neighborhood disorder levels increased, trouble with the law/illegal activity still increased. After control variables were entered, economic disadvantage was still significant ( $p \leq .05$ ). As with previous analyses, issues of multicollinearity are present.

Results are presented in Tables 3-8 through 3-10 and parameter estimates are presented in Table A-3.

Final OLS multiple regression analysis estimated the effects of perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage on minor law violations. Model 1 shows perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage account for 2.5% of the variation in minor law violation levels. ANOVA results suggest that findings are likely to be obtained by chance ( $F= 1.323$ ,  $p=.271$ ). Additionally, the model parameter showed that as perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage increased, respectively, minor law violation levels increased, which supports this paper's hypothesis. Perceived neighborhood disorder was found to be significant at the .05 level. Model 2 introduced control variables in the analysis. Independent and control variables present account for 9.9% of the variation in depression levels. ANOVA results for Model 2 were similar to Model 1, suggesting a strong likelihood that outcomes may be obtained by chance ( $F= 1.552$ ,  $p= .159$ ). Model parameter results indicated that as economic disadvantage and perceived neighborhood disorder increased, respectively, minor law violation levels increased. There were no significant findings when independent and control variables were introduced into analyses. Based on relatively low eigenvalues and high condition indexes for the analysis, collinearity issues may also be present. Results are presented in Tables 3-11 through 3-13 and parameter estimates are presented in Table A-4.

Table 3-1. Bivariate Correlations Output

		Economic Disadvantage	Self-Reported Criminal Activity	Perceived Neighborhood Disorder	Depression
Economic Disadvantage	Pearson Correlation	1	.075**	.096**	-.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.000	.000
	N	1331	1331	1331	1331
Self-Reported Criminal Activity	Pearson Correlation	.075**	1	-.012	-.080**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.650	.004
	N	1331	2482	1332	1332
Perceived Neighborhood Disorder	Pearson Correlation	.096**	-.012	1	-.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.650		.086
	N	1331	1332	1332	1332
Depression	Pearson Correlation	-.332**	-.080**	-.047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.086	
	N	1331	1332	1332	1332

Table 3-2. OLS Statistical Model Summary using Depression as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	.110 <sup>a</sup>	.012	-.007	.63150	.012
2	.238 <sup>b</sup>	.057	-.010	.63245	.045

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender

c. Dependent Variable: Depression

Table 3-3. Statistical ANOVA Summary using Depression as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.510	2	.255	.639	.530 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	41.475	104	.399		
	Total	41.984	106			
2	Regression	2.386	7	.341	.852	.547 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	39.599	99	.400		
	Total	41.984	106			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender

c. Dependent Variable: Depression

Table 3-4. Statistical Collinearity Summary using Depression as the Dependent Variable<sup>a</sup>

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
1	--	--	
	--	--	
	3	.002	42.663
2	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	8	.002	57.913

a. Dependent Variable: Depression

40

Table 3-5. OLS Statistical Model Summary using Self-Reported Criminal Activity as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	.230	.053 <sup>a</sup>	.035	.07635	.053
2	.349	.122 <sup>b</sup>	.060	.07535	.069

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender

c. Dependent Variable: Self-Reported Criminal Activity

Table 3-6. Statistical ANOVA Summary using Self-Reported Criminal Activity as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.034	2	.017	2.905	.059 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	.606	104	.006		
	Total	.640	106			
2	Regression	.078	7	.011	1.964	.068 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	.562	99	.006		
	Total	.640	106			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender

c. Dependent Variable: Self-Reported Criminal Activity

Table 3-7. Statistical Collinearity Summary using Self-Reported Criminal Activity as the Dependent Variable<sup>a</sup>

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
1	--	--	
	--	--	
	3	.002	42.663
2	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	8	.002	57.913

a. Dependent Variable: Self-Reported Criminal Activity

Table 3-8. OLS Statistical Model Summary using Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	.276	.076 <sup>a</sup>	.059	.204	.076
2	.368	.136 <sup>b</sup>	.074	.206	.059

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender
- c. Dependent Variable: Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal

Table 3-9. Statistical ANOVA Summary using Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.364	2	.182	4.296	.016 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	4.403	104	.042		
	Total	4.766	106			
2	Regression	.646	7	.092	2.219	.039 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	4.120	99	.042		
	Total	4.766	106			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender
- c. Dependent Variable: Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal

Table 3-10. Statistical Collinearity Summary using Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal as the Dependent Variable<sup>a</sup>

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
1	--	--	
	--	--	
	3	.002	42.663
2	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	8	.002	57.914

a. Dependent Variable: Trouble with the law/Done Something Illegal

Table 3-11. Statistical Model Summary using Minor Law Violation as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	.158	.025 <sup>a</sup>	.006	.190	.025
2	.314	.099 <sup>b</sup>	.035	.187	.074

a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder

b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender

c. Dependent Variable: Minor Law Violation

Table 3-12. Statistical ANOVA Summary using Minor Law Violation as the Dependent Variable<sup>c</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.096	2	.048	1.323	.271 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	3.755	104	.036		
	Total	3.850	106			
2	Regression	.381	7	.054	1.552	.159 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3.470	99	.035		
	Total	3.850	106			

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Disadvantage, Perceived Neighborhood Disorder, Spouse Employment Status, Respondent Race, Respondent Employment Status, Total Household Income, Gender
- c. Dependent Variable: Minor Law Violation

Table 3-13. Statistical Collinearity Summary using Minor Law Violation as the Dependent Variable<sup>a</sup>

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index
1	--	--	
	--	--	
	3	.002	42.663
2	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	--	--	
	8	.002	57.913

- a. Dependent Variable: Minor Law Violation

## CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS

### **Discussion**

This study's main objective was to determine whether an associational relationship existed between the following: (1) social disorganization and crime, (2) social disorganization and depression, and (3) crime and depression (as a result of strain caused by social disorganization). Results of the correlation analyses indicate relationships between depression and economic disadvantage; depression and self-reported criminal activity; economic disadvantage and self-reported criminal activity; economic disadvantage and perceived neighborhood disorder. Though strain and its interaction effects were not measured, economic disadvantage (proposed to influence strain levels) was the only indicator of social disorganization found to be a significant predictor of both self-reported criminal activity and depression. Based on correlation analysis, there appears to be a negative relationship between self-reported criminal activity and depression. This finding was not expected and contradicts previous studies which found positive, significant relationships between the two variables (Paxton et al., 2004). One possible explanation for this finding is that although pairwise deletion techniques were used, a substantial amount of responses were deleted from correlation analyses, which would alter the results. Another explanation might be that individuals who are depressed are less likely to leave their homes (than non-depressed individuals), which would limit their participation in outside criminal activities.

Though causality cannot be determined these findings still advance research on community-level crime and depression. First, economic disadvantage was significant in some models of criminal behavior while perceived neighborhood disorder was not and vice versa depending on which measure of criminal behavior was used, the scale of criminal activity or

individual items measuring criminal behavior. Secondly, strain experienced as a result of social disorganization may not have a strong effect on depression (as was proposed). Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage, as indicators of social disorganization, held no significant ability to predict depression. Though entered as control variables, future research may consider the direct effects of gender and spouse employment status on depression and self-reported crime.

In summation, the analyses show mixed support for the hypothesized relationships between crime, depression, and social disorganization. Based on regression analyses, social disorganization was associated with self-reported criminal activity (a significant relationship was found between economic disadvantage and self-reported criminal activity) and having trouble with the law (a significant relationship was found between economic disadvantage and self-reported criminal activity). Based on the findings, there was no significant association found between social disorganization and depression. Contrary to expectations, correlation analyses found a significant negative relationship between depression and self-reported criminal activity. Nonetheless, a strong positive association was found between economic disadvantage and self-reported criminal activity in some of the analyses. The relationship between crime and depression (explained by the effects of social disorganization) cannot be determined based on the present analyses, as analyses did not examine the interaction effects of crime and depression. Nonetheless, social disorganization only held marginal predictive validity on criminal activity ( $R^2 = .053$ ) and depression ( $R^2 = .012$ ) when entered in Model 1 (Table 3-5) of regression analyses. This indicates that a third, unknown variable, may account for a greater percentage of variation in the dependent variables. This unknown variable may also explain the main and net

effects of crime and depression on one another (relative to the effects of social disorganization on crime and depression).

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

First, attrition presented major issues when running analyses. For example, reliability analysis shows that nearly half of participant responses to Ross-Mirowsky scale were eliminated due to “system missing” data. All findings, then, must be viewed with this caveat. Eliminating a large set of responses will skew all correlation, regression, and ANOVA analysis. While this paper does not explore the effect of “system missing” responses in the Ross-Mirowsky Perceived Neighborhood Disorder scale, one possible result is that the relationships reported between dependent and independent variables (depression, self-reported criminal activity, perceived neighborhood disorder, and economic disadvantage, respectively) are inaccurate. In this sense, the negative relationship reported between perceived neighborhood disorder and depression is incorrectly signed (meaning the relationships between the variables may be positive, as opposed to being reported negative, or vice-versa), as are the relationships between economic disadvantage and depression; self-reported criminal activity and depression; self-reported criminal activity and perceived neighborhood disorder. The assumed wrong sign direction reported in correlation analyses may be a function of the large attrition rate of the Ross-Mirowsky scale. As noted, these findings offer at best mixed support for expectations from theory and the previous literature which finds positive relationships between these variables, respectively. Similarly, the self-reported criminal activity scale, which has a low alpha reliability, may severely skew the findings in this study and help explain the assumed wrong sign direction of the analytic results. Secondly, interview questions did not allow respondents to include motivations or influences for committing crime or becoming depressed. Because the Community, Crime, and Health survey was cross-sectional, the following is not clear: (1)

attrition rate, (2) dates interviews were conducted, and (3) the long-term or interaction effects between social disorganization, crime, and depression. This study's research design did not address buffering or coping strategies, such as collective efficacy, that may deter or limit engagement in criminal activities and/or depressive symptoms. Third, the findings in this study do not support the proposed positive relationship between crime and depression. Statistical errors, which may appear in the dataset and/or analyses, might help explain this contradiction. Thus, future studies must examine this dataset to determine if similar findings occur. Additionally, the research design did not control for respondent ages, which may influence perceptions or awareness of disorder. Based on collinearity diagnostics, the severe possibility of multicollinearity cannot be discounted. Future research must address these issues and determine if the present study's results are replicated and generalized. Finally, one cannot exclude the effect(s) that eliminating Hispanic respondents from regression and ANOVA analyses had on this study's outcome. Individuals of Hispanic ethnicity may have different responses to and perceptions of economic disadvantage and perceived neighborhood disorder which this paper does not consider. Likewise, due to the fact many respondents did not answer questions gaging family income, one can expect the overall findings in this paper to be skewed. By eliminating the dummy variable from analyses, one must view this study's findings with caution.

Findings and conclusions must be viewed in light of the limitations of the study. The present study addressed the relationship between perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage (as independent variables) on dependent variables, yet, there may be indicators or examples of social disorganization the study does not take into account. Another issue not discussed in the current study is the "type" or "category" of crime one may commit as a result of economic disadvantage. Deviant responses to financial strain may presumably range from a

petty crime such as shoplifting to a more serious infraction such as aggravated robbery. Finally, the study faced the same problem that all secondary data analyses of not always finding the measures to relate directly to the concepts and variables found in the literature and included in the theoretical framework.

Ultimately, it is clear that in order to develop effective policies and social programs, future studies must examine the detrimental effects of social disorganization on communities. Additionally, applying other criminological theories, such as Social Learning Theory and Differential Association Theory, may be helpful in determining the mechanisms used to cope with strain and depression, and deducing the motivations behind criminal engagement. Using social learning theory as a theoretical framework, for example, longitudinal studies on adolescents might examine the predictive effects that learning deviant responses has on crime commission. Likewise, cross-sectional studies may examine the effect that associating with delinquent peers has on future crime commission and depression.

Based on the findings in this paper and issues with the dataset used, several suggestions can be offered for future research on this subject. First, future researchers should design a longitudinal study which explores the long-term effects of strain and/or social disorganization on crime and depression. Secondly, future studies should increase the survey distribution and sample size to areas outside of one state. In doing so, research can gauge the effects of social disorganization in different tracts and may also limit the potential for large attrition rates. Finally, future studies should consult other studies on this subject and create scales which accurately detail the variables of interest (i.e., depression, criminal activity, financial strain/disadvantage). The present study used occurrences such as lack of sleep and happiness to represent depression, which may be problematic and subject to criticism.

APPENDIX  
PARAMETER ESTIMATES FOR OLS REGRESSION MODELS

Table A-1. Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage effects on depression (parameter estimates for OLS regression)

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.689	1.226		1.377	.171
	Perceived neighborhood disorder	-.190	.196	-.096	-.971	.334
	Economic disadvantage	-.231	.317	-.072	-.730	.467
2	(Constant)	1.336	1.285		1.039	.301
	Perceived neighborhood disorder	-.177	.203	-.089	-.872	.385
	Economic disadvantage	-.185	.322	-.058	-.572	.568
	Gender	.305	.147	.242	2.078	.040
	Spouse employment status	.070	.135	.056	.518	.606
	Respondent race	.099	.334	.030	.295	.768
	Total household income	-.019	.171	-.012	-.114	.909
	Respondent employment status	-.065	.146	-.052	-.443	.659

Table A-2. Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage effects on self-reported criminal activity (parameter estimates for OLS regression)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	.295	.148		1.991	.049
Perceived neighborhood disorder	-.020	.038	-.052	-.534	.595
Economic disadvantage	-.057	.024	-.233	-2.406	.018
2 (Constant)	.333	.153		2.175	.032
Perceived neighborhood disorder	-.025	.038	-.064	-.660	.511
Economic disadvantage	-.056	.024	-.231	-2.337	.021
Gender	-.010	.017	-.065	-.579	.564
Spouse employment status	-.033	.016	-.210	-2.020	.046
Respondent race	.036	.040	.087	.895	.373
Total household income	-.007	.020	-.037	-.364	.717
Respondent employment status	-.009	.017	-.057	-.506	.614

Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage effects on depression (parameter estimates for OLS regression)  
 Table A-3. Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage effects on trouble with the law/done something illegal  
 (parameter estimates for OLS regression)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.440	.400		3.604	.000
Perceived neighborhood disorder	.175	.064	.262	2.740	.007
Economic disadvantage	-.060	.103	-.055	-.578	.564
2 (Constant)	1.667	.415		3.557	.001
Perceived neighborhood disorder	.025	.065	.245	2.504	.014
Economic disadvantage	.056	.104	-.066	-.688	.493
Gender	.010	.047	.094	.845	.400
Spouse employment status	.033	.044	.173	1.675	.097
Respondent race	-.036	.108	-.180	-1.861	.066
Total household income	.007	.055	.010	.095	.925
Respondent employment status	.009	.047	-.067	-.598	.551

Table A-4. Perceived neighborhood disorder and economic disadvantage effects on minor law violation (parameter estimates for OLS regression)

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.379	.369		3.737	.000
	Perceived neighborhood disorder	.053	.059	.146	1.484	.007
	Economic disadvantage	.142	.095	.088	.900	.564
2	(Constant)	1.194	.380		3.138	.002
	Perceived neighborhood disorder	.062	.095	.178	1.811	.073
	Economic disadvantage	.173	.060	.103	1.034	.304
	Gender	.001	.043	.001	.012	.991
	Spouse employment status	.057	.040	.150	1.427	.157
	Respondent race	.058	.099	.058	.581	.559
	Total household income	.024	.051	.050	.482	.631
	Respondent employment status	.063	.043	.167	1.466	.146

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