

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE**

### **Violent Crime and Social Disadvantage: A Criminological Enigma**

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#### **Abstract**

Individuals' involvement in crimes on the basis of their being socially disadvantaged remains a puzzle in criminological literature. Many scholars including some senior sociologists often argue that those without means of social and economic survival are the leading perpetrators of crimes in society. On this premise, it was further stressed that, criminologists should not bother searching elsewhere for crime causation. Clear as the argument appears, rest the puzzle which highlights the fact that there are many social disadvantaged that are not into crime, just as there are individuals from affluent backgrounds that are into crime. Socio-economic conditions of the social disadvantage which make crime attractive to them are neglected. What makes social disadvantage settings criminogenic and affluent settings less? Facts in criminological literature do not see crime as a sole function of poverty rather as a function of myriad of factors. This paper sets to highlight this enigma and why criminologists are not in a hurry to subscribe to the view that the relationship between social disadvantage and crime is glaring to establish crime causation outside any direction.

**Keywords:** Social Disadvantage, Violent Crime, Enigma, Poverty.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

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Everybody believes that "poverty causes crime" it seems; in fact, I have heard many a senior sociologist express frustration as to why criminologists would waste time with theories outside the poverty paradigm. The reason we do... is that the facts demand it.<sup>1</sup>

Crime in its entire ramification remains a social problem within human society since time immemorial, the solution of which over the years, challenged government of various countries across the globe. Violent form of crime appears more disturbing to humanity because it threatens peace and social order. Murder as an example of violent crime, particularly is seen as the barometer of the state of the nation in terms of a measure of civilization<sup>2</sup>. The concern with crime is not only on the infraction of the mandated rules but more importantly as a commitment to dealing with crime understood as a violation of the conditions for our human flourishing.<sup>3</sup>

The repercussions of violent crime are many. It could divide a community, damage reputations, and cause lifelong harm. It tells people that no matter where they go, they may encounter violent acts, even at their offices or at home. Violence committed is not solely by gang boys and drug dealers<sup>4</sup>. Violent crime for instance, affects developments of individuals, groups and nations, sends fear to people and attracts enormous cost on its containment. For instance, the annual costs of the government apparatus required to deal with crime and violent victimization across the Globe, were estimated by the Institute for Economics and Peace in Australia, to be close to US\$2 trillion in 2014, a figure that reached US\$14.3 trillion, or 13.4 % of the global GDP, when the costs related to violence from conflicts are added<sup>5</sup>.

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- 1 Sampson, R. J. (2000). Whither the sociological study of crime? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 711-714.
  - 2 (Soothill and Francis, 2012).
  - 3 (Kleining, 2009).
  - 4 (Siegel, 2011:332).
  - 5 (Gramckow et. al., 2016:8).

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Crime in whatever form to economists, is seen as a rational behaviour, where the offender has to weigh between the benefits (which includes but not limited to, social recognition, power and prestige or economic in forms of money and property) and the costs (being arrested or jailed) makes crime to have some economic determinants and value<sup>6</sup>. Some scholars<sup>7</sup> however suggested that criminologists should shift their search for etiology of crime in society away from individual determinants to situations that could make occurrence of crime likely. They argued that reviews made from literature reinforce the point that crime cannot be understood primarily in terms of individual characteristics, incentives, or resources. It has to be understood in terms of situations, attachments, networks, and contexts<sup>8</sup>.

Social disadvantage is the comparative lack of social and economic resources and typically in reference to families and neighbourhoods which is somehow implicated in crime causation<sup>9</sup>. The concept of social disadvantage reflect that position individuals occupies in the social ladder which makes them vulnerable to crime commission due to lack of access to education, decent income opportunities and social circles they found themselves<sup>10</sup>. Some scholars referred to social disadvantage as poverty which was conceptualized as lack of education, problems with employment, substance abuse, and a low

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6 Usman, I. N. A. (2021) Socio-economic Status of convicted prisoners and violent crimes in Niger State, Nigeria an unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the Post Graduate School of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

7 like Sharkey, Besbris and Friedson (2017).

8 (Sharkey, Besbris and Friedson, 2017).

9 Wikström, P.-O. H., & Treiber, K. (2016). Social Disadvantage and Crime: A Criminological Puzzle. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(10), 1232–1259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216643134>.

10 Usman, I. N. A. (2021) Socio-economic Status of convicted prisoners and violent crimes in Niger State, Nigeria an unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the Post Graduate School of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

likelihood of prosocial attachments<sup>11</sup>. The relationship between social disadvantage and violent crime or just crime in general terms is far from a simple one-to-one relationship, and researchers avidly disagree about the strength and nature of this relationship, with some even questioning whether there is a relationship at all<sup>12</sup>. It is on this premise that criminological literature is replete with arguments on the central question thus: what makes individuals from social disadvantaged backgrounds always at the wrong side of the law to the extent that they are not only disproportionately represented in virtually all forms of crime, but equally so among correctional institutions population? The stated criminological puzzle remains the focus of this paper. We would explore the debate in the literature on various dimensions to it and at the end take a position that new direction which centres on social context and environmental settings has emerged.

## **2. DEFINITION OF VIOLENT CRIMES**

Criminological literature concerning crime definition is replete with contradictions. While Martin<sup>13</sup> noted that crime or offence (or criminal offence) is an act harmful not only to some individual or individuals but also to a community, society or the state ("a public wrong"), Bartol<sup>14</sup> quoted Tappan, who defines crime as an intentional act, which is in violation of the criminal law committed without defence or excuse and penalised by the state as a felony or misdemeanour. Stressing further that criminal behaviour was therefore intentional behaviour that violates a criminal code, intentional in that it did not occur accidentally or without justification

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11 Draine, J., Salzer, M. S., Culhane, D. P., & Hadley, T. R. (2002). Role of social disadvantage in crime, joblessness, and homelessness among persons with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 53(5), 565-573.

12 Wikström, P.-O. H., & Treiber, K. (2016). Social Disadvantage and Crime: A Criminological Puzzle. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(10), 1232-1259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216643134>.

13 Martin, E.A. (2003). *Oxford dictionary of law, 7th edition*, Oxford: Oxford university press.

14 Bartol, C.R. (1980), *Criminal Behaviour: A Psychosocial Approach* Dewey:Prentice Hall PTR.

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or excuse. It must be noted that reference to law of an act was inadequate in the definition of crime, the intent of the actor must also be taken into consideration. Chukkol<sup>15</sup> further explained crime to mean any: "human conduct which the state decides to prevent by threat of punishment, liability of which is determined by legal proceedings of special kind".

Furthermore, an act is violent crime when reference is made to law. Thus, a violence act which contravenes the law of any society is referred to as violent crime or criminal violence. Riedel and Wayne<sup>16</sup> aptly wrote that:

What turns the threat, attempt, or use of physical force by one or more persons toward others into criminal violence is *law*. Without law, violence may be outrageous, immoral, depressing, hurtful, demoralizing, and lamentable, but it is not a crime. Certain acts of violence cannot be tolerated in an ordered society, so representatives of a government create rules prohibiting some forms of violent behaviour outright and circumscribing their expression in other instances. Sanctions, such as incarceration, are imposed for violations of these laws.

Violent crime is conventionally addressed using the official definition of 'violence against the person' that focuses on assaults with and without injury<sup>17</sup>. Violent crimes or violent offenses involve the use of force or injury to the body of another person. The seriousness of a violent crime is usually determined by the degree of physical harm caused to the victim. The use of a weapon could raise the seriousness of the crime. Some crimes are classified as violent crimes even if the victim was not injured. For example, crimes that involve the threat of

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15 Chukkol, K.S. (2010), *The law of crimes in Nigeria*. Zaria: ABU press.

16 Riedel, M. and Wayne, A (2016) *Criminal Violence: Patterns, Explanations and Interventions* [www.researchgate.net/publication](http://www.researchgate.net/publication) assessed on 25/11/2018.

17 Walby, S. Towers, J., and Francis. B., (2016). Is violent crime increasing or rising? A new methodology to measure repeat attacks making visible the significance of gender and domestic relations *British Journal of Criminology* vol 56 pp 1203-1234 doi:10.1093/bjc/n2v131.

injury to a person would be qualified as a violent crime<sup>18</sup>. Some crimes like arson, rape, psychological abuse or threat of them fall within this category.

Meanwhile, Nigeria as a country which has an estimated population of close to 170 million people, (2006 population census) has over 50 % as persons whose age ranged from 15 and 25 years<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, Nigeria has a population of energetic and curious persons. It is often stated that poverty in Nigeria is prevalent among this category of people. Though, young and energetic, most youths lack requisite qualifications to be engaged in meaningful jobs or where such qualifications exist, working experience required for some jobs are not easy to come by as most of them are just fresh school leavers<sup>20</sup>. Philips<sup>21</sup> argued that the pressure of poverty could create individual irresponsibility, correspondingly deviance, especially when they suffer stress from powerlessness or when they are unable to control their own lives.

### **3. SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE AND VIOLENT CRIME NEXUS**

The relationship between socio disadvantage and crime in the criminological literature is diverse. There are some researchers whose studies indicate a direct relationship between low socio economic status and crime. It is stated that condition of poverty increases the likelihood that a person would commit crime, be apprehended and

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18 Izzi, M.(2017). <http://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/non-violent-vs-violent-crimes.html>.

19 Williams, S. (2014), "Mentoring and leadership for progress in higher institution" A public lecture delivered at Federal University of Technology (FUT), Minna on 7th May, 2014 School of Information and Communication Technology (SICT) lecture theatre.

20 Kale, Y. (2015). A keynote Address delivered as Statiscian General of the federation at the National Consultative Committee on statistics (NCCS) and the Validation workshop on the Reversed Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDC) in Nigeria held at Saminaka Holiday Resort, Kaduna State on 2nd – 4th December.2015.

21 Philips, D. (1991). A nation of rogues ? Recent writings on crime, law and punishment in Australian history. *Business & Society*, 24(2), 328–358.

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become the victim of crime<sup>22</sup>. As important as poverty in the discussion of its impact on crime is, it is redolent of other factors. Hence poverty is not sufficient cause of crime. Factors like social processes of the family, school and peers, low level of parental supervision, erratic, threatening, and harsh discipline and weak parental attachment are also vital in the explanation of crime<sup>23</sup>. Some other studies look at societal level stressing that eras of economic depression, pervasive unemployment and inequality have witnessed upsurge in both property and violent crimes<sup>24</sup>.

Further, Ruiz, Mc Mahon and Jason<sup>25</sup> assess the role of community violence and low socio economic status as bases for academic performance in a study of 297 Chicago Public elementary schools, and reported that low socio economic status was associated with lower academic achievement, and violent crime. Also, Lockwood<sup>26</sup> related social disadvantage with violent crimes through a geocoding of 26,467 violent reported crimes from a United States (US) Census data and concluded that assault in the neighbourhood was associated with social disadvantage.

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- 22 Delisi, T. and Piquero, A. (2011), Newfrontiers in criminal careers research 2000-2011: A state -of- the- art- review in *Journal of criminal justice* vol.2 no 7.
  - 23 Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life. *Crime & Delinquency*, 39(3), 396-396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128793039003010>.
  - 24 May, H. (1999). "Who killed whom? Victimization and culpability in social construction of murder" in *British journal of sociology* vol. 50 no. 3 pp 489-506.
  - 25 Ruiz, L.D., Mc Mahon, S.D., and Jason, L.A. (2018), "The role of Neighbourhood Context and School Climate in School-level Academic Achievement" in *American Journal of Community Psychology* vol.61 issue 1-2 pp 264 March 2018.
  - 26 Lockwood, D. (2007) Mapping crime in Savannah: Social disadvantage, land use and violent crimes reported to the police. Social science computer Review.elibrary.ru.

In addition, Jung, Chun and Kim<sup>27</sup> studied ambient population for four times daily and reported consistent association with level of assault throughout the study period. The authors further discovered that the percentage of single member households and the distance to the nearest subway station were constantly associated with assault density. Writing on the topic deconstructing neighbourhood effects on violent across aggravated domestic and simple assault, Bogges, Chamberlain and Gill<sup>28</sup> examined neighbourhood effects on violent crime generally and aggravated assault specifically, reported that community context influences serious and less serious forms of violence.

In a study which uses situational action theory (SAT) to analyse the effects of socioeconomic disadvantages on criminality rates (namely, robbery) in Brazilian municipalities, Raiher<sup>29</sup> identified social disadvantage greater effect (i.e. variation of the mean Education and Health Firjan indices) when compared to economic disadvantage on the criminality in Brazilian municipalities. This effect was more noticeable in regions with poorer social infrastructure. Moreover, the crime environment to which individuals are exposed has a positive association in the determination of illegal acts in line with the argument of SAT.

Starting from juvenile point, Heimer<sup>30</sup> looked at social structure and personality of individuals in a study that apply social learning theory as a guide, he discovered that violent delinquency was a product of learning definitions favourable to violence, which was itself determined directly or indirectly by association with aggressive peers,

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- 27 Jung, Y., Chun Y. and Kim K. (2022) Modeling Crime density with population dynamics in space and time: An application of Assault in Gangnam, south Korea *Crime and Delinquency* 0011128720948037.
  - 28 Bogges, L.N., Chamberlain, A.W. and Gill, L. (2022) Deconstructing neighbourhood effects across agrgravated, domestic and simple assault *Journal of crime and justice*1-2, 2022.
  - 29 Augusta Raiher (2022) Criminality and socioeconomic disadvantage: a spatial analysis throughout Brazilian municipalities, *Oxford Development Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/13600818.2022.2033190.
  - 30 Heimer, K.(1997),Socio-economic status, sub-cultural definitions, and violence delinquency *Social Forces* vol. 75 No.3 (March 1997) PP 799-833.

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socioeconomic status, parenting practices and experienced violent delinquency. Two issues or lines of argument come to the fore from the above Heimer's study. One was the cultural orientations which depict criminal violence as the outcome of normal process of social learning certain groups allegedly endorse values that are supportive of violent behaviour<sup>31</sup>. Secondly, the argument that socioeconomic deprivation approach which focuses on hardship and deprivation. It asserts that individuals are viewed as being driven to violence because of their unfortunate location in the social structure. Such position could be the disadvantage position of the parents of the individuals, the race as the case of developed societies like America, Britain, France or Germany.

Furthermore, in a study by Lobout, Nicotescus, Moldovan and Kuloglu<sup>32</sup>, it was reported that the study of the Romania socioeconomic situation and crime rate revealed an increase in income inequality and the place of residence of individuals in urban areas which have strong and robust effect on crime rate rising. Also, in their study of violence crime and security challenges in the city of Tijuana in Mexico, Lira, Orozco, Ferreira and Shirk<sup>33</sup> report that though Tijuana was a city filled with organized criminal activities, the city saw a rise in the investigation on homicide from 872 to 1,618, an increase of roughly 86 % in just a year. Where increase in homicide patterns could be attributable to dynamics among criminal organizations, the authors concluded that the distribution of violence in Tijuana was uneven and reflects geographic, economic and social divisions in the city, particularly the poor and the marginalized communities that is to say the social disadvantage.

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31 Steven F. Messner, (1988) Research on Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors in Criminal Violence, *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, Volume 11, Issue 4, 1988, Pages 511-525, ISSN 0193-953X, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-953X\(18\)30466-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-953X(18)30466-0).

32 Lobout O., Nicotescus A., Moldovan N, and Kuloglu A (2017). Other effect of socio-economic factors on crime rates in Romania macro level analysis *journal of economic research Ekonomika litrazivabnja* 30 (2)2017.

33 Lira, J.A..S., Orozco, Z., Ferreira, O.R., and Shrik, D. A. (2018). The Resurgence of violent crime in Tijuana *Justice in Mexico- Policy Brief* February 2018.

The relationship between social disadvantage and violent crime is not only established in the literature as highlighted by some scholars above, Lofstrom and Raphael<sup>34</sup>, emphasized that even sanctions in both their scope and intensity, in America society were disproportionately borne by “low-income house hold, less educated and the African Americans”.

#### **4. THE CRIMINOLOGICAL ENIGMA**

Writing on the origins of criminology, Rafter Nicole<sup>35</sup> likens the growth and development of criminology with a series of cottage industries. Small centres of production, makeshift in the sense that criminological work was often peripheral to the researcher’s central endeavour, were scattered thinly around Europe and the eastern United States. One could be found in Turin, Italy, another in Perth, Scotland, and still others in London, Lyon, New York, Paris, and Vienna. But what did researchers in these small centres, which sometimes consisted of little more than a desk and a sheaf of notes on criminal cases, aim at accomplishing?

Some histories offer accounts of what went on in specific centres of production – an Italian army doctor using his early morning hours to dissect the brain of a Calabrian brigand; a New York City businessman collecting criminals’ genealogies in his spare time; Quaker siblings arguing that English absentee landlords should relinquish the brutalizing practices that pushed Irish peasants into crime; Parisian anthropologists readying for battle against the absurdities of Italian criminal anthropology<sup>36</sup>. The point being made here is that criminology right from birth began with diversity on the basis of researchers and areas of their focus. This can be exemplified by diversity of sources most of it belonged to other intellectual territory – anthropology, evolutionary science, jurisprudence, phrenology, physiology, and (especially) psychiatry.

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34 Lofstrom M. and Raphael S. (2016). Crime, the Criminal justice system, and socioeconomic inequality *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30(2) spring pp103-126.

35 Rafter Nicole (2009) *The Origins of Criminology A Reader*.

36 Ibid.

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Having pass through time, criminology and its practitioners focus on different aspect of human endeavour in attempt to explain crime and perpetrators of crimes, environment from where they come and how such social settings become criminogenic. Some criminologists are concerned with decision making process on the part criminals. On this basis that Cornish and Clarke<sup>37</sup> explained decision making model of crime which have topics like initiation (the factors influencing the initial decision to become involved in suburban burglary); habituation (the rewards of crime and by consequent changes in the offender's circumstances, such the acquisition of new friends, increased professionalism, and changes in lifestyle and associated values); desistance (is lack of success in bringing crimes to satisfactory completion (including brushes with the law) and increasing reluctance to take risks, together with further changes in current); the crime event (situational factors that hinder or advance instrumental action in fulfilment of the criminal goal.) and crime scripts (Crime scripts are designed to help identify every stage of the crime-commission process, the decisions and actions that must be taken at each stage, and the resources – such as criminal cast, props and suitable locations – required for effective action at each step).

Another form of explanation of crime by criminologist is done through the Strain theory: This theory holds that individuals would turn to a life of crime or violence when they are strained, or when they are unable to achieve the goals of the society be it power, finance, or some other desirable goals. Often referred to as General Strain Theory (GST) is seen as a psychosocial concept that could explain individual-level offending.

In his revised strain theory Agnew provided an insight into why negative family issues could lead to delinquency and eventually crime. Accordingly, Agnew<sup>38</sup> negative relationships with families,

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37 Cornish D. B. and Clarke R.V. (2008) *The Rational choice perspective in* Wortley R. and Mazerolle (eds), *Environmental Criminology and crime Analysis* Willian Publishing UK.

38 Agnew, R. (1992), *Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency*. *Criminology*, 30, 47-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093.x>.

teachers, and others in the immediate social environment of adolescents may lead to delinquency when they (1) try to escape from negative stimuli; or (2) try to remove the source of those stimuli; (3) seek revenge against the source of negative stimuli; and (4) try to manage the situation by taking illicit drugs<sup>39</sup>. This revised edition of strain theory by Agnew that brought to the fore the relevance of stressful situations created not only by the cultural goal as posited by Menton and other classical theories, but also removal of loved ones or poor treatment by parents or care giver<sup>40</sup>.

Linked to the individual strains is the learning theory of crime. In criminology, most attention has been given to the way patterns of criminal behaviour are acquired over time, through childhood experiences and the like. However, learning theory also holds that for learned behaviour to be produced on any given occasion it needs to be evoked by an appropriate environmental stimulus. Four kinds of environmental prompts are discussed here in relation to criminal behaviour<sup>41</sup> – triggers (Some environmental prompts elicit involuntary, or reflex, physiological responses. The salivation by Pavlov's dogs is an example of a reflex response), signals (Environmental cues can provide information about what is appropriate behaviour in a given context. For example, we learn that it is appropriate to drive through an intersection when the traffic light is green but not when it is red. Offenders rely on such signals all of the time to alert them to when crime is 'appropriate'), models (The observation of someone performing a behaviour can prompt imitation. Children who watch other children play aggressively also play aggressively) and expectancies (Expectancy refers to the tendency for individuals to respond to their preconceived ideas about

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39 Ibid.

40 Usman, I. N. A. (2021) Socio-economic Status of convicted prisoners and violent crimes in Niger State, Nigeria an unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the Post Graduate School of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

41 Wortley, R. (2008) Situational precipitators of crime in Wortley R. and Mazerolle (eds), *Environmental Criminology and crime Analysis* Willian Publishing UK.

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a situation. Individuals can derive expectancies from situational cues)<sup>42</sup>.

Continuing with the criminological enigma is also the focus of criminologists on not only crime, criminals or how they come to learn criminal skills and environment or community based crimes, attention is also given to the victims of crime- those who criminal activities affects directly. An aspect of criminology referred to as victimology dwell on the need and concerns of crime victims. Through the Restorative justice movement of the 1980s, crime victims sought for greater involvement in the criminal justice process, compensation for losses and a path to healing the emotional wounds of crime<sup>43</sup>. When Umbreit et al<sup>44</sup> tested one of the fundamentals of restorative justice empirically; they reported that victims involved in restorative justice sessions have reported higher levels of satisfaction than their counterparts in the traditional criminal justice system concerning their experience of fairness receipt of restitution and reduction in fear and anxiety.

Furthermore, in his meta-analysis of seven studies screened for statistical comparison, Poulson

found significant positive results from victims including their satisfaction with the handling of the case, their opportunity to tell his or her story, their belief that the offender was held accountable, whether apology was offered, and whether the victim was still upset about the crime.<sup>45</sup>

It was the change of direction from individual level of crime explanation which was championed by the classical and positivist schools of criminology, that Shaw and Mc Kay decided to focus on

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42 Ibid.

43 Amstutz L (2004) What is the relationship between the victim service organizations restorative justice? In: Zehr H, Toews B (eds) Critical issues in restorative justice. Criminal Justice Press, Monsey, pp 85-94.

44 Umbreit M, Vos B, Coates R, Brown K (2003) Facing violence: the path of restorative justice. Criminal Justice Press, Monsey.

45 Poulson Barton (2003) A third voice: a review of empirical research on the psychological outcomes of restorative justice. Utah Law Rev 1:167-203.

the city ecology to bring us to social disorganization theory of crime. This is the continuation of the criminological enigma. According to Shaw and McKay's classic work, the same socio-economically disadvantaged areas in 21 US cities continued to experience high delinquency rates over a span of several decades despite changes in their racial and ethnic composition. This demonstrated the persistent contextual effects of these disadvantaged communities on crime rates, regardless of what populations experienced them. This finding forced the researchers to abandon individualistic cause of crime to focus on the community process leading to the apparent trans-generational transmission of criminal behaviour.<sup>46</sup>

The social organizational approach arising out of Shaw and McKay's work views local communities and neighbourhoods in terms of systems of friendship, kinship and acquaintanceship networks, as well as formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes.<sup>47</sup> Social disorganization has been defined as the "inability of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls"<sup>48</sup>. After a study to test concentric zone theory through the use of courts records over several decades, Shaw and McKay were able to show that crime levels were highest in slum neighbourhoods regardless of which racial or ethnic group resided there and, moreover, as these groups moved to other zones, their offending rates correspondingly decreased. On this basis, they concluded "that it was the nature of the neighbourhoods – not the nature of the individuals who lived within them – that regulated involvement in crime"<sup>49</sup>,

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46 Usman, I. N. A. (2021) Socio-economic Status of convicted prisoners and violent crimes in Niger State, Nigeria an unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the Post Graduate School of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

47 Kawachia I. Kennedy, B. P., Richard. C, and Wilknsn, C (1999). "Crime: Social disorganization and relative deprivation" in *Social Science and Medicine*. Vol. 48, issue 6, pp 719-731 Elsever Science Ltd.

48 Ibid.

49 Shaw, C. R., & McKay, H. D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas: A study of rates of delinquents in relation to differential characteristics of*

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Shaw and Mckay basically argued that crime and criminal behaviour of young persons, juveniles and even adults could best be understood with reference to the social context. Socially disorganized neighbourhoods serve as these social contexts because the required social control mechanisms are lacking and youths roam on streets to be recruited as members of gangs and other antisocial groups who perpetrate crime and violence within the neighbourhoods. This crop of youths could likely be carriers of next generation of the area's criminal tradition<sup>50</sup>.

A fundamental community-level theory, social disorganization theory posits that crime and delinquency are more pronounced in areas characterized by persistent poverty, population heterogeneity, and residential mobility, which combine to disturb the capacity of neighbourhoods to maintain informal social control. These ideas have been well investigated and empirically supported, leading social disorganization theory to become the most well-known theory of neighbourhood crime in the field of Criminology today.<sup>51</sup>

One of the first and enduring criticisms of social disorganization theory was the assumption of a stable delinquency pattern in the community rather than one experiencing change. For instance, Walker<sup>52</sup> tested this hypothesis and found out that communities with rapid population changes recorded high crime/delinquency rates when compared with communities with moderate or low population changes. The researcher's analysis indicated that communities with the highest rates of population change had an average of 12 more offenses per 1,000 youth than areas with either moderate or slow change. On this basis they concluded that it was the *nature* of the

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local communities in American cities. Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press.

- 50 Burke R. H. (2009), *Social Disorganization Theory An Introduction to Criminological theory* (3rd ed) Devon U.K.: Willan Publishing, Culmokoth House.
- 51 Parker K. F. and Stansfield R. (2014). "Disadvantage, disorganization and Crime" in *Encyclopaedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* Bruisma and Weisburd (eds) New York: Springer USA.
- 52 Walker J T. (2014). "Social disorganization theory" in *Criminology: A reference Handbook* California: Sage publications.

change, not the *people* involved in the change that was affecting delinquency. It could be noted at this point that most the criminological theories that attempt to link poverty or social disadvantage with crimes from strains, social disorganization theory or the learning paradigm overlooked some fundamentals as argued by Pratt and Eisentraut<sup>53</sup> that neither perspective devotes much attention to how certain behaviours come to be labelled by society as “criminal.” Indeed, although the bulk of the theories that are typically covered in criminology textbooks share the contention that groups of individuals are mired in a system of social stratification, they overlook the degree to which power differentials between the relatively powerful and powerless groups in society may shape not only individuals’ behaviours, but also the social perceptions of those behaviours.

Discussions of the relationship between poverty and crime, which are often guided by conflict theory, attempt to fill this theoretical void<sup>54</sup>. At its most basic level, conflict theory draws on the Marxian tradition and is most concerned with “[focusing] attention on struggles between individuals and/or groups in terms of power differentials.<sup>55</sup>”

Even though, macro-level concepts such as poverty and inequality are now being extended into new areas of criminological research. In particular, studies of offender recidivism are now being couched in the both the language and theory of poverty and inequality.<sup>56</sup> All in all, poverty and inequality have a strong presence in the criminological literature that shows no signs of slowing down.

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53 Pratt T.C and Eisentraut B.D. (2014) Poverty, Inequality, and Area Differences in Crime in *Encyclopaedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* Bruisma and Weisburd (eds) New York: Springer USA.

54 Ibid.

55 Lilly JR, Cullen FT, Ball RA (1995) *Criminological theory: context and consequences*, 2nd edn. Sage, Thousand Oaks.

56 Reisig MI, Bales WD, Hay C, Wang X (2007) The effect of racial inequality on black male recidivism. *Justice*

Q 24:408–34.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

By way of conclusion we could state here that the proposition that low socio-economic status of perpetrators or social disadvantage contributes significantly to involvement in violent forms of crime or the general crime as established in criminological literature, which alone was not enough to explain the complex phenomenon of crime. It was at this point that criminological enigma or puzzle lies as criminologist were not in total agreement as far as social disadvantage and violent crime or general crime is concern let alone on the diversities of topics which criminologists paid attention in a bid to explain crime in human society and across time.