

Chapter 29

Social Inequality, Crime, and Deviance

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Abstract. This chapter examines the role of social inequality in crime and deviance by specifying a social psychological theory of the causal mechanisms by which inequality is associated with crime. We begin by noting that the powerful have more input into the content of criminal law, a point illustrated by the relatively soft penalties for white collar and corporate crimes compared to the harsh penalties for street crimes typically committed by the less powerful. We then draw on pragmatist social thought and criminological theory to provide an integrated social psychological explanation that helps explain how social inequality may produce high rates of crime. We apply this perspective to explain crime rates across neighborhoods and communities, as well as crime across the life course. We end with a discussion of the consequences of mass incarceration for reproducing social inequality in the United States.

Keywords: Crime, disadvantage, neighborhoods, life course, incarceration, symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, subculture, norms, status

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Introduction

Social inequality has long been theorized to be associated with crime. Over 50 years ago, Edwin Sutherland (1947) argued that crime rates are low in egalitarian, consensual societies and high in inequitable societies characterized by conflicting beliefs. It is likely that crime rates are high in inequitable societies because members of disadvantaged groups or classes have particularly high rates of offending. Within the United States, high rates of crime and violence are strongly associated with extremely disadvantaged inner-city urban areas, compared to affluent urban neighborhoods and rural areas. If inequality and disadvantage are associated with crime, what are the causal mechanisms that explain the association between inequality, disadvantage, and crime? How do these causal mechanisms vary across space (neighborhoods and communities) and time (across a person's life-span)? Given that serious criminals risk incarceration, what roles do crime and incarceration play in the reproduction of social inequality?

This chapter explores these questions. It begins by addressing the question of the definition of crime, arguing that the powerful have more input into the content of criminal law, which is illustrated by the harsh penalties for street crimes typically committed by the less-powerful compared to the relatively soft penalties for white collar and corporate crimes. The chapter then draws on pragmatist social thought and criminological theory to provide an integrated social psychological explanation that helps explain how social inequality may produce high rates of crime. This perspective is then applied to explaining crime rates across neighborhoods and communities and explaining crime across the life course. The chapter ends with a discussion of the consequences of punishment of crime for reproducing social inequality in the United States.

Inequality in the United States

Economic inequality in the United States is extremely high and has increased precipitously over the past 25 years (e.g., Neckerman & Torche 2007). Among the 30 industrialized nations belonging to the

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only Mexico and Russia—two nations considered still developing—display greater income inequality (Smeeding 2005). Of the remaining 28 OECD countries, the U.S. has by far the highest income inequality. In the U.S., wages polarized during the late 1980s and then stabilized in the 1990s and 2000s. The unprecedented level of inequality can be traced to two trends: increases in wage inequality over the past two decades and the worsening position of the urban underclass in many American cities over the past 40 years.

Wage inequality increased during the 1980s due to four events: (1) Increases in returns to higher education interacted with increases in skill-biased technical change to create demand for highly-educated managers and white collar workers. (2) Unions declined, decreasing the bargaining power of employees, which explains as much as 30 percent of the growth in wage inequality when considering effects of union decline on both union and non-union pay (Western & Rosenfeld 2011). (3) The “treaty of Detroit” (1950-1970)—which legitimized collective bargaining, created a tripartite institutional framework between labor, industry, and government, and consequently stabilized wage inequality—gave way to the “Washington consensus” (1970-today)—which weakened labor unions, undermined the tripartite institutional framework, deregulated the financial industry, lowered taxes on non-labor and the highest income tax bracket, and stimulated unprecedented growth in the financial sector (Levy & Temin 2011). (4) The decline of the institutional framework and norms of the “Detroit treaty,” along with skill-biased technical changes, transformed top executive skills from firm-specific to generalized skills, freeing top executives to take bids from competing firms, all of which resulted in precipitous increases in executive compensation.

At the same time, within the inner-cities of major metropolitan areas in the U.S.—particularly in rustbelt cities—problems such as concentrated poverty, joblessness, out-of-wedlock births, crack-cocaine use, and violent crime—worsened. The concentrated problems of the urban underclass increased from 1970 to 1990. During the 1990s, however, with the economic boom, along with changes in public policy (such as expansion of the earned income credit, and changes in housing assistance) the problem of the underclass dimin-

ished in magnitude (Jargowsky & Yang 2006). More recently, the Great Recession of the 2000s has reversed this trend, producing as much as a 25 percent increase in the number of poor places and the people who live in them. Additionally, the welfare reforms of the 1990s exacerbated the plight of the poor, although these effects were initially hidden by the economic boom only to be revealed later during the recession years. Moreover, class and racial segregation created high concentrations of poor minorities in inner cities as well as rural areas (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino 2011). These trends, combined with trends in wage inequality, have resulted in extreme inequality in contemporary America. The remainder of this chapter examines mechanisms by which inequality produces crime.

Inequality and the Definition of Crime

In modern industrial societies, the content of criminal law, the administration of justice, and the infliction of punishment are, at least in part, the result of a political process in which the powerful have the greatest influence. Crime, then, is ultimately rooted in political-economic inequality in a profound way: political inequality shapes the very definition of what constitutes criminal behavior. This is not to deny that a broad consensus exists about serious crimes. Legal scholars make a useful distinction between *mala in se* crimes—those acts considered wrong in and of themselves—and *mala prohibita* crimes—those acts that are criminalized strictly by statutory law. *Mala in se* crimes entail violations of person or property, include most serious felonies, such as murder, arson, theft, burglary, and rape, and enjoy widespread consensus. Rooted in the oral tradition of common laws in Europe during the middle ages, *mala in se* laws were later adopted into U.S. penal codes. By contrast, *mala prohibita* crimes, such as traffic violations or tax laws, are justified not on the grounds of moral outrage, but rather as necessary for a regulated and orderly society. Such laws are typically passed by a legislature through a political process in which a politically powerful group succeeds in mobilizing resources to realize their interests in the law—at times despite popular disagreement. Criminal law and public policy intended to address problems of social control originate in

a confluence of political-economic interests, mass media depictions, and political framing (Beckett 1997; Garland 1990). Typically, class interests underlie such processes. Garland (1990:117) has argued that to understand how class is translated into criminal law, one must “appreciate the ways in which particular interests are interwoven with general ones” such that protection of class interests are disguised as protection of universal interests.

The relationship between class interests, social inequality, and the definition and administration of law stands in sharp relief when considering crimes of corporations. Edwin Sutherland (1949) coined the term “white collar crime”—“crimes committed by persons of respectability and high status in the course of their occupation”—to draw attention to a class of *mala prohibita* offenses, largely ignored by criminologists and citizens alike. Sutherland showed that these offenses, committed by members of upper classes, are crimes just like those committed by lower classes, and differed only in the administrative procedures used in dealing with the offenders. Administered in criminal court, street crimes are punished with relatively harsh, stigmatizing sanctions, even when relatively small sums of money are involved—for example, in burglary cases. By contrast, white collar crimes are often administered in civil court or administrative hearings, and are usually punished with mild sanctions even when huge sums of money were involved—for example, in anti-trust cases. Sutherland argued that reasons for this discrepancy were twofold. First, unlike street crimes, in which an angry victim is aware of the pain, suffering, and loss caused by the crime, corporate crimes often lack such a clear victim. For example, victims of restraint of trade, Ponzi schemes, and misbranding of consumer goods are often unaware of their victimization and its cost. Second, in a free-market economy, corporate actors yield enormous wealth and political influence to use in nullifying regulations and combatting stigmatization.

Even if the public can be galvanized around the problem of corporate crime and clamor for stronger regulation and enforcement, there is evidence that large corporations will continue to enjoy lenient treatment by the courts and government. Judicial decision-makers increasingly rule that symbolic, rather than actual, adherence to the law by large corporations is sufficient, setting legal precedents

for relaxed enforcement of actual compliance in the future (e.g., Edelman et al. 2011). The financial dependence of government officials on large corporations and wealthy donors may also pose difficulties in increased regulation of white collar crime. For example, the close relationship between legislators and the savings and loan industry—including large campaign donations—contributed to the slow response of Congress to regulate firms involved in the savings and loan crisis in the 1980's (Calavita, Tillman & Pontell 1997).

Despite Sutherland's writings, with a few notable exceptions, criminologists have focused on crime in the streets rather than crime in the suites. Criminal violence has been defined as a public health problem, falling under the purview of research funding from the National Institutes of Health. Comparatively little research funding has targeted corporate and white collar crime. Consequently, a voluminous literature has accumulated on explaining ordinary crimes. The remainder of this chapter will focus on this literature, seeking to develop a social psychological explanation of crime and apply it to research on inequality and street crimes. Nevertheless, we should remain mindful that, as labeling and group conflict theorists have shown, group interests and social inequality play an important role in the very definition of deviant and criminal conduct (e.g., Becker 1963; Turk 1969).

Inequality and Crime: An Integrated Social-Psychological Theory of Causal Mechanisms

In this section, we attempt to explain differences in criminal and deviant behavior, given the existing definitions of crime. To do so, we develop an integrated social-psychological theory of the causal mechanisms by which structural forces, such as income inequality, produce crime and deviance. Our perspective draws principally from the writings of American Pragmatists, particularly G. H. Mead, Dewey, and W.I. Thomas.

The Influence of the Chicago School on Contemporary Criminological Theory

Pragmatist ideas underlie much of Chicago school sociology, which in turn, forms the basis of much classical criminological theory and research, including theories of social disorganization and cultural transmission, differential association, labeling, and even social control theory. These classical theories, however, lack an explicit social psychological theory of decision-making within situations. In this section we briefly show how many prominent criminological theories have their roots in the Chicago school and pragmatist ideas, but lack a fully-developed theory of cognition and decision-making.

Social Disorganization Theories. Building on Park and Burgess's work on urbanization, Shaw and McKay (1969) mapped rates of juvenile delinquency by neighborhood and over time across the city of Chicago. From these maps they concluded that delinquency rates were highest in the center of the city in which residential areas were being invaded by industry; delinquency rates dropped monotonically as one moved from the center of the city to the periphery; these patterns remained stable over decades despite the complete ethnic turnover of the zone in transition. Shaw and McKay argued that city growth, especially business and industry invading residential neighborhoods, produces community social disorganization, the breakdown of social controls. More recently, researchers have specified the causal mechanisms—particularly informal social control—by which disorganization produces high rates of crime (e.g., Sampson & Groves 1989). Shaw and McKay also found evidence of interlocking networks of delinquent groups over time, and case study evidence that young delinquents learned delinquent traditions from older groups of offenders. They used the term cultural transmission to describe this intergenerational transmission of a delinquent tradition, a process later developed by learning theories.

Differential Association and Social Learning Theories. Shaw and McKay's (1969) results suggested that delinquency was learned from other delinquents, echoing earlier findings on delinquency transmission in gangs (Thrasher 1927), and as well as the learning of specialized skills and justifications of crimes through tu-

telage among professional thieves (Sutherland 1937). Formalizing these ideas into his social psychological theory of differential association, Sutherland (1947) posited that all crimes are learned through associations with others in a process of communication in intimate groups, which includes learning the techniques for crime as well as definitions favorable and unfavorable to crime. The latter derives from W.I. Thomas' concept of the definition of the situation: some define crime as inappropriate under any circumstance, while others may define crime as appropriate in certain situations. Such moral evaluations justify crime in circumscribed contexts. Sutherland also specified his concept of differential social organization to explain aggregate crime rates: the crime rate of a group or society is determined by the extent to which it is organized in favor or crime (e.g., cultural transmission) versus organized against crime (e.g., social organization). Criminologists later attempted to state differential association in terms of psychological learning theories, including Skinnerian principles of operant conditioning, and more recently, Akers' (1985) social learning theory, which builds on Bandura's (1986) learning theory to specify that crime is learned through associational learning, vicarious reinforcement, and modeling.

Labeling Theories. Labeling theory can be traced to the writings of Tannenbaum (1938), who was strongly influenced by the ethnographic work of Thrasher and Shaw and McKay. Tannenbaum noted that at times a child's behavior, defined by the child as fun, excitement, and play, is defined by the larger community as evil, bad, and irresponsible. Consequently, the child is labeled as a bad kid, or as a troublemaker, by the larger adult community and singled out for punishment, or treatment. Repeated negative interactions between the youth and community may leave the child in the hands of the juvenile justice system, cut off from conventional society, stigmatized as a deviant, and thrown into association with similarly-stigmatized youth, who may reinforce deviance and defiance. Thus, had the child's initial spontaneous acts been treated as a normal part of growing up, the child would not have taken the path toward a criminal career. In other words, the initial labeling process produced a self-fulfilling prophesy, in which the child ended up confirming the initial deviant label. Labeling theory was further developed by Lemert (1951) and Becker (1963), who each drew on symbolic in-

teractionism to formalize the label as a definition of a situation, and distinguish between primary (initial acts of deviance) and secondary (deviance resulting from an initial label) deviance. More recently, Braithwaite (1989) has incorporated labeling theory into his theory of reintegrative shaming, arguing that societies should avoid the stigmatizing effect of severe sanctions, such as incarceration, in favor of public shaming followed by forgiveness and reintegration back into conventional society.

Social Control Theories. Control theories relate to the Chicago school as an individual-level counterpart to the community-level concept of social disorganization. The most prominent control theories are associated with the work of Travis Hirschi (1969), who distinguished control theories from other criminological theories by two assumptions: the motivation to deviate is constant across persons, and therefore, not an explanatory variable; and delinquent peers have no causal effect on delinquency. Consequently, deviance is taken for granted—we all would if we dared—and conformity is left to be explained. Conformity, for Hirschi, is explained by individuals having strong bonds to conventional society, including strong attachments to others, commitments and involvements in conventional lines of action, and strong moral beliefs. More recently, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) specified a theory of low self-control, in which self-control, a stable trait that protects against crime, is inculcated in children by the age of culpability, usually age 7 or 8. Parents who closely monitor unwanted behavior in their children and express disapproval of that behavior build in high self-control in their children. High self-control, in turn, selects for positive social environments throughout life—such as educational attainment, pro-social peers, stable employment, and good marriages—and at the same time, allows individuals to control their deviant tendencies. By contrast, individuals with low self-control tend to be impulsive, present-oriented, and unskilled, and are unable to control their deviant impulses and tend to select into negative environments, including dropping out of school, and having delinquent peers, unstable work lives, poor marriages, and high rates of divorce.

Each of these theories draws from elements of the Chicago school of sociology, and therefore, the philosophical tradition of

pragmatism, but does not fully embrace pragmatist principles or specify a situational decision-making model of criminal behavior. In the next section, we elaborate on Matsueda (2006b) and specify such a model, drawing principally from the writings of social control by Mead (1934) and Dewey (1922).

Differential Social Organization

We follow Sutherland (1947) and use the concept of differential social organization to describe how macro-level structures and organization produce crime. Although social organization is implicated in crime, some forms of organization suppress, control, and regulate crime, whereas others foster crime, and still others may simultaneously suppress some crimes while fostering others. To simplify the concept of organization, we use the analytic categories organization against crime and organization in favor of crime, and posit that the crime rate of a group or society is a function of the relative strength of each (Sutherland 1947). Matsueda (2006a) has shown that, when viewed dynamically, differential social organization becomes a theory of collective action, which implicates access to resources, structural ties, and collective action frames as explanatory concepts. For an application to genocide in Darfur, see Hagan and Raymond-Richmond (2009).

From this perspective, Shaw and McKay's concept of social disorganization reflects weak organization against crime, whereas cultural transmission reflects strong organization in favor of crime. Affluent neighborhoods with abundant resources, strong network ties, and collective efficacy are strongly organized against crime. By contrast, disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods with few resources and a code of violence governing the streets are weakly organized against crime and strongly organized in favor of violence. We will discuss these examples in later sections, showing how differential neighborhood organization is produced by individual behavior. But first, we specify a theory of situated criminal decisions.

A Pragmatist Theory of Situated Criminal Decisions

One of the hallmarks of the Chicago School is a preoccupation with the problem of social control—how do organized and informal groups control the behavior of members? Mead (1934) emphasized the primacy of the group over the individual: selves, self-control, and cognition are all rooted in organized groups, and self-control and social control are identical processes merely viewed from different standpoints, the individual and the group, respectively. We begin with a situated interaction, in which crime is a potential outcome and to which participants bring their biographical histories, including habits, attitudes, and preferences. The interaction is structured by a goal, which is constantly negotiated, always tentative, and perpetually subject to change. Whereas utilitarian theories make the teleological assumption that ends are fixed and means are negotiated, pragmatist theories assume that in negotiating means, ends can be modified and vice-versa (Dewey 1958; Joas 1996). In common institutionalized settings, in which situations remain unproblematic, goals are shared and behavior is both goal-directed and habitual. In the extreme case, little self-consciousness exists, reflection is minimal, and behavior consists of playing out pre-existing learned attitudes, scripts, and preferences. For example, professional pickpockets coordinate their roles—the “stall” provides a diversion, the “hook” takes the wallet from a pocket, and the “cleaner” disposes of its contents—to minimize the risk of getting caught (Sutherland 1937). After repeatedly conducting such coordination, the behaviors become habitual and virtually automatic, unless a problem arises.

When habitual behavior is interrupted—temporarily blocked by a physical or social object—the situation becomes problematic for the actor, who experiences an emotion (such as fear or disgust) and engages in a cognitive process to solve the problem. Cognition consists of an imaginative rehearsal, in which the actor takes the role of the other, and considers alternative lines of action (in the form of attitudes, which are predispositions to act) from the other’s standpoint (Dewey 1922; Mead 1934). At this point, the self as an object arises: the self is imagined carrying out the alternate line of action, which elicits a response from the standpoint of others—either a positive evaluation, leading to overt behavior, or a negative evaluation,

blocking the alternative (attitude) and eliciting another alternative (attitude) from the standpoint of others. Thus, cognition is a process of resolving, in the mind, conflicting attitudes and the selves to which they correspond. This process is analogous to a conversation of gestures—which signify attitudes—between self and other, but occurs in the mind, rather than in overt interaction. Cognition continues until the problematic situation is resolved and habitual behavior will suffice, or the interaction simply fades.

In the example of pickpocketing, at times something unexpected disrupts the intended action—perhaps the victim realizes the wallet is being taken or a bystander intervenes on behalf of the victim. The situation becomes problematic for the thieves who take the role of the group, and consider alternate lines of action, such as covering up the wallet, denying the theft, or threatening the victim and bystander. The last resort would be giving back the wallet to cool out the mark—a calculated response demonstrating street smarts or “larceny sense.”

Once the problematic situation is solved, the alternatives, evaluations of those alternatives, and other information used in cognitive processing are incorporated in a relatively enduring self through memory, available to be called up in the future to solve similar problematic situations (Mead 1934). When similar situations are repeatedly encountered, and are resolved in comparable ways, they become less problematic, and behavior increasingly habitual, as the individual learns to adapt to the environment. Eventually, initial attitudes cease to be blocked, cognition is unnecessary, and behavior becomes habitual, institutionalized, and driven by initial attitudes. For example, during the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s, many urban street gangs made a transition to drug dealing to capitalize on moneymaking opportunities (Blumstein 1995; Coughlin & Venkatesh 2003). During the transition, gang members develop novel relationships with local communities, including customers, suppliers, and other local residents—a process fraught with problematic situations, as members adapt to a new and uncertain environment. Eventually, those relationships become institutionalized and unproblematic, and behavior habitual.

This situational model implies that the outcome of interaction is more than the mere sum of the biographical histories of inter-

actants, but also contains an emergent process resulting from individuals' reconstruction of the present perceptual field using the past in anticipation of a future (Mead 1932). Nevertheless, situated interactions are rarely created anew from whole cloth, but rather are more or less patterned. The more institutionalized the setting, the less unique and more patterned the interaction. Most settings fall in between extremes of uniqueness and predictability, sharing an institutionalized component but also a novel aspect. The patterned component of interaction arises from the biographical histories of participants, of which the key components are preferences, information, identities, and reference groups.

Pragmatism and Rationality

Our model is consistent with a model of weak rationality (e.g., Hechter & Kanazawa 1997). It departs from a rational choice utility-maximization model of decision-making, which often treats preferences, beliefs, and tastes as a given, assumes actors have access to full information about the consequences of their behavior, and presumes that individuals can maximize expected utility subject to constraints (e.g., McCarthy 2002). Instead, we assume that preferences, which consist of attitudes, social identities, and habits are endogenous and important predictors of behavior. Furthermore, we assume that, because of limitations in information processing, individuals do not typically consider a full range of possible alternative choices or maximize utility. Instead, for pragmatists, the criterion for resolving a problematic situation—using the first alternative that comes to mind that is not blocked by the self as an object—is more consistent with a model of bounded or limited rationality. Rather than conducting an exhaustive search for full information and then maximizing utility, actors typically satisfice based on serial consideration of a few possible solutions. In rare instances of particularly vexing decisions, multiple conflicting responses may be called out, and long deliberations—which end up approximating a utility maximization model—may be needed to solve the problematic situation.

A key variable for bounded rationality is the distribution of information. Because of cognitive constraints on information pro-

cessing, individuals have limited access to information about the consequences of behavior. A byproduct of a pragmatist theory of situated decision-making is a theory of learning, which derives from taking the role of the generalized other in cognition. Once the problematic situation is resolved, the solution, along with evaluations from the standpoint of the group, is retained as a part of the self. In its simplest form, such learning takes on the form of updating: an individual updates their knowledge of the consequences of lines of action from the standpoint of others. Consistent with social learning theory, such learning occurs principally within social groups.

Moreover, once habits are formed, either through intuitive acts or conscious reflective decision-making, they serve as “standing decisions” for future similar situations. When standing decisions (habits) fail to suffice, problematic situations are often solved using simple shortcuts and rules of thumb, via social intuition (e.g., Simon 1957; Tversky & Kahneman 1974). Finally, we assume that the interplay between habit, social intuition, and controlled reasoning is modulated by social context. More elaborate decisions approximating utility maximization are a relatively rare and special case, in which simple solutions fail to suffice, and a more elaborate and time-consuming search for a solution is needed.

Reference Groups as the Source of Preferences, Information, and Identities

The self, then, arises in social interaction as an object, and thus, is socially constituted (given meaning). For Mead (1964:141), the self has a definite social structure, which derives from the organized groups in which the individual participates: “Inner consciousness is socially organized by the importation of the social organization of the outer world.” That structure consists of the “generalized other,” which encompasses the norms, rule, and expectations governing various positions and roles of the group. The process of taking the role of the generalized other is the most effective form of social control because organized groups and institutionalized norms enter individual behavior, and because moral questions can be considered by increasingly wide groups, thereby approaching a universal discourse.

For Mead (1934), child development consists of learning to take the role of the generalized other.

The self is a multidimensional and complex concept. To simplify matters, we specify the structure of the self as consisting of three overlapping concepts: information, preferences, and identities. Information consists of knowledge relevant to a problematic situation, including alternative solutions, and the consequences—costs and benefits—of those alternatives. Preferences consist of habits, attitudes, and evaluations of alternatives. They are learned through interaction within reference groups through observational learning as well as social interaction. Attitudes, or predispositions to act, are crucial here, as they produce habitual behavior and, along with evaluations of alternatives, are the stuff making up the serial process of cognition: an attitude gives rise to another evaluative attitude from the standpoint of others, and so on. Attitudes derive from organized groups, principally through interactional learning.

Here, the proposition of differential association and social learning theories follows: criminal behaviors—including evaluations or attitudes favorable and unfavorable to crime—are learned in interaction in primary groups. Whereas learning theories specify that criminal behavior is strictly determined by such evaluations, we argue that evaluations of crime are used to solve problems in either a criminal or noncriminal ways, as the individual exercises agency by taking the role of the other, considering alternatives from the standpoint of others, and finding a solution that will resolve the problem. This process of role-taking implicates the self, as an object from the standpoint of others, as a key locus of control of criminal behavior. Although the self as an object arises in interaction to solve problematic situations, it contains an enduring or stable component, which is multidimensional, corresponding to the structure of organized groups in which the individual participates. That organization includes the complex interrelationships among roles, goals of the group, as well as expectations, norms, and sanctions governing those roles.

The stable component of the self is termed “role-identities” by symbolic interactionists to emphasize that they correspond to a person’s group roles, and consist of ways the person sees oneself from the standpoint of others (McCall & Simmons 1978; Stryker

1980). Identity theories hypothesize that individual behavior is linked to organized groups through the concepts of role-commitments and role-identities. Strong commitment to specific roles in an organized group increases the probability that the group will serve as a generalized other, and a source of social control in problematic situations. Commitment to roles is linked to the (stable) self through identities. For identity theorists, the self is a set of hierarchically organized role-identities. The stronger the commitment to the role, the more salient the corresponding role-identities, and the more likely they will inform habits, social intuition, and controlled cognitive processes (e.g., Stryker 1980). These identities are built up via social interaction: through repeated role-taking within organized groups, commitments to group roles are built up, corresponding identities are developed, and group-specific habits are formed. Over time, such role-identities solidify in prominence and increasingly guide both habitual and cognitive behavior. In the extreme, a “role person merger” may take place, in which one comes to identify so strongly with a role that one seeks to enact the role even when it may be inappropriate (Turner 1962).

Identities, then, link organized groups to criminal behavior. For example, a debt collector working for a loan shark habitually threatens customers who have defaulted on a loan in order to uphold his identity and a reputation as a tough guy not to be messed with. In general, because we participate in multiple groups that sometimes conflict—either internally within groups or externally across groups—the self, made up of information, attitudes, and identities, is multidimensional and at times in conflict. This conflict appears in social cognition, which is a serial process of resolving conflicting information, attitudes, and identities.

For example, Cressey (1953) found that embezzlers typically took positions of financial trust in good faith and viewed themselves as upstanding businessmen. However, when confronted with an unshareable financial problem, such as a gambling or drug addiction, and realizing that the problem could be solved by violating the trust, they absconded with the money. They resolved their conflicting identities—as an upstanding businessman and an embezzler of funds—using vocabularies of motive or evaluative definitions of embezzlement, such as “I’m just borrowing the money.” These em-

bezzlers had strong bonds to conventional society, but confronted a problematic situation and used vocabularies of motive to neutralize the law (e.g., Matza 1964).

Cressey's (1953) study suggests two concepts external to role-taking that are important to explain crime: the presence of a financial problem, and the opportunity to solve the problem with crime. We can generalize these concepts, drawing on recent criminological theory. First, general strain theory, based on Merton's (1957) structural theory of anomie, provides an individual-level theory of strain or aversive stimuli and criminal behavior (Agnew 1992). The argument made by Agnew is that those who experience aversive stimuli, such as flunking out of school, losing a job, or enduring a divorce, are more likely to engage in deviant behavior, unless they have strong social support networks to help them cope with the strain. From the standpoint of pragmatism, such strains block habitual behavior and produce problematic situations, which may be resolved with criminal behavior depending on the self and information, attitudes, and identities relevant to crime. Second, routine activities and opportunity theories of crime specify that crime occurs at the intersection of a motivated offender, suitable target (e.g., a victim), and absence of capable guardians (e.g., witnesses or police) (e.g. Cohen & Felson 1979;). Thus, crime is constrained by the structure of objective opportunities. Of course, such opportunities are irrelevant if one does not perceive them as such, and often motivated offenders actively search for suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians. A pragmatist perspective can explain motivation, perception, and search.

Causal Mechanisms of Classical Criminological Theories as Special Cases

Because many classical criminological theories derive from the Chicago school of sociology, their causal mechanisms are consistent with our pragmatist perspective. We argue that, in many instances, they become special cases of a general pragmatist decision-making model. For example, social control theories emphasize that attachments and commitments to conventional roles—such as new roles in

the transition to adulthood—reduce the likelihood of crime (e.g., Sampson & Laub 1993). But social control is exerted by criminogenic groups as well, and criminal behavior is likely a function of the two forms of group control on role-taking, cognition, and the formation of habits. Thus, Heimer and Matsueda (1994) termed this, “differential social control,” to emphasize the role of delinquent and conventional groups in determining behavior.

Differential association and social learning theories are special cases of learning information relevant to crime, which are used to solve problematic crime situations through role taking. This includes the requisite criminal skills and techniques, as well as evaluations of crime and the anticipated consequences of crime. Our model, however, also provides a situational decision-making mechanism that implicates criminal and conventional identities in the process of taking the role of the other. Labeling theory provides a set of hypotheses about how identities are shaped by interactions with adult society and the legal system. Thus, the hypothesis of deviance amplification, in which negative labeling by adult society and the juvenile justice system may stigmatize youth, produce secondary deviance, and create a self-fulfilling prophecy, is consistent with our perspective, which provides a decision-making model explaining how this process produces secondary deviance. As noted above, our perspective is consistent with a model of bounded rationality, in which decisions are practical and often consider only two or three alternatives, rather than full information, and often use shortcuts or standing decisions, rather than utility maximization.

Inequality, Reference Groups, and Social Cognition

Our social-psychological model implies that organized or informal groups control individual behavior. Within a group, the key is whether, in the organization of roles, there are some roles in which criminal acts are either expected or tolerated. The organization of such roles will include information, attitudes, and identities conducive to criminal behavior. The nature of these roles is highly variable. For example, adolescent male peer groups may contain overwhelmingly conventional roles, but have a minor role for resorting

to violence against outsiders only when an outsider threatens one of their members. By contrast, for many inner-city turf gangs, violence is a defining feature of the group, which contains role-expectations of violence for merely encroaching on the gang's territory. In financial organizations, embezzlement typically results from an isolated individual solving a financial problem using rationalizations. Other financial organizations, such as Ponzi schemes, are organized explicitly to make money by defrauding investors.

Organized groups are embedded in a broader context of social structure, which constrains an individual's participation in organized groups. A key element of social structure is social inequality, which fundamentally affects the social distance between groups (e.g., DiMaggio & Garip 2011). The greater the social distance between groups, the greater the divergence in communication networks, and therefore, the greater the divergence in information, attitudes, and identities. Such divergence is associated with disparate and at times conflicting information, attitudes, and identities, which, in turn, will be associated with disparate and conflicting behaviors. When divergences in communication networks become institutionalized—presumably because of enduring structural inequalities—cultural differences become more pronounced and subcultures develop.

As noted earlier, in most democratic societies, rich and politically powerful groups have the strongest influence on the process by which laws are passed and enforced. It follows that, generally speaking, the closer a group is to the political-economic process producing and enforcing law, the more likely their preferences, interests, and objectives will be aligned with law. Furthermore, all else being equal, those groups will have the lowest crime rates on average, whereas those groups furthest away from the process producing and enforcing law will have the highest crime rates, on average. In societies in which there is a relatively permanent class of chronically poor, jobless, and disenfranchised, crime rates will be high, particularly among the disadvantaged but also other classes due to spillover effects.

Beyond the absolute level of disadvantage, crime rates may be a function of the absolute level of inequality in society. In relatively egalitarian societies, there is little potential for high crime

rates: between-group communication is high, generalized others tend to overlap, and information, preferences, and identities tend to be homogenous. In societies characterized by great social inequality, there is strong potential for high crime rates: between-group communication is low, generalized others tend to be provincial, and preferences tend to differ across groups. In the next sections, we explore the links between inequality and crime by examining crime rates across neighborhoods and communities, and examining crime across the life course.

Crime Across Neighborhoods and Communities

A Multi-Level Model of Differential Neighborhood Organization and Crime

We build on the earlier work of Sutherland (1947) and Matsueda (2006a) to specify differential neighborhood organization, in which organization against crime is the social system producing collective efficacy and informal social control, and organization in favor of crime is the social system producing the code of the street (see Matsueda 2013). Each of these social systems draws explicitly from the structural arguments of W.J. Wilson's underclass thesis of high rates of criminal violence in inner-city neighborhoods.

Inequality, Residential Segregation, and Extreme Disadvantage: The Urban Underclass

William Julius Wilson (1987) brought attention to the problem of a growing urban underclass in major American cities beginning in the 1970s, showing that rates of female-headed households, joblessness, poverty, crime, and violence had worsened by the 1980s. Wilson (1987) provided an explanation of the growing underclass, stressing broad historical transformations in the economy that disproportionately affected young black males in urban areas in the Midwest and Northeast. These transformations included the great migration of

southern blacks to rustbelt cities (1910-1970), to take manufacturing jobs created by industrialization; deindustrialization, in which the economy shifted to a service economy during the recession of the 1970s (producing a spatial mismatch between jobs and skills); the historical legacy of racial discrimination, which persisted across generations; and the increase in the percentage of 14-24 year olds (the peak years for crime and out-of-wedlock births) among inner city blacks. The confluence of these social forces set the stage for the creation of an urban underclass in many large cities.

Why did the position of African-Americans worsen after the mid-sixties, when civil rights created new structural opportunities for blacks? Wilson argues that the loss of manufacturing jobs disproportionately affected urban young black males, creating high rates of joblessness in this group. At the same time, civil rights, affirmative action, and fair housing laws helped a significant number of black families move up the status ladder into the middle class. Like most upwardly-mobile Americans, once they reached the middle class, these families moved out of the inner-city into better (and thus, more white) neighborhoods with better schools, less crime, and higher property values. As a consequence, inner-city communities lost some of their best role models (Wilson 1987), and also lost valuable social capital, undermining local social cohesion and trust.

Social Disorganization, Social Capital, and Collective Efficacy

A resurgence of interest in social disorganization theory in the 1980s stimulated new research on crime rates across neighborhoods and communities (e.g., Bursik & Webb 1982; Sampson & Groves 1989), largely reaffirming the findings of Shaw and McKay (1969). Recently, Peterson and Krivo (2010) find that whites and racial-ethnic minorities live in divergent socioeconomic worlds generated by racialized social structures, which in turn produce socioeconomic differences and ultimately differences in crime rates.

Researchers have explored the neighborhood-level causal mechanisms by which local structural conditions produce crime (e.g., Sampson & Groves 1989). In a landmark paper, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) combined Coleman's (1990) concept

of social capital with Bandura's (1986) concept of collective efficacy to refine and elaborate on the causal mechanism of informal social control (see also Sampson 2012). In psychology, Bandura (1986:391) is well-known for his concept of self-efficacy, which he defines as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances." For Bandura, net of an individual's skills and opportunities, individuals who perceive a high degree of personal efficacy will outperform those with little self-efficacy because they can act with persistence, overcome obstacles, and capitalize on narrow opportunities. Self-efficacy is learned through self-observations of performance, vicarious observations of others, making social comparisons, and the like. Group or collective efficacy, the counterpart to self-efficacy, consists of members' perceptions of the efficacy of the collectivity, and will "influence what people do as a group, how much effort they put into it, and their staying power when group efforts fail to produce results" (Bandura 1986:449).

Sampson et al. (1997) applied the concept of collective efficacy to neighborhood action, tied it to Coleman's (1990) concept of social capital, and borrowed operational indicators from previous neighborhood surveys of informal social control (e.g., Taylor 1996). Sampson et al. (1997: 918) treat collective efficacy as a task-specific property of neighborhoods—namely, "the capacity of residents to control group level processes and visible signs of disorder" which helps reduce "opportunities for interpersonal crime in a neighborhood." Collective efficacy is tied directly to the presence of neighborhood social capital: "it is the linkage of mutual trust and the willingness to intervene for the common good that defines the neighborhood context of collective efficacy" (1997: 919). We view collective efficacy as the entire process of moving from social capital to informal control and then to reduced rates of crime and incivility.

Collective efficacy theory, then, specifies a macro-to-macro link between neighborhood social capital, which consists of rates of reciprocated exchange (neighbors exchanging favors, information, and goods) as well as intergenerational closure in social networks (a child's parents know the parents of the child's friends), and neighborhood informal control of youth. Such social capital provides the

resource potential for activating collective efficacy, which for the control of crime means intervening when crime or incivilities occur in the neighborhood. Sampson et al. (1997) find empirical support for this specification: neighborhood mean levels of reciprocated exchange and intergenerational closure are associated with neighborhood mean levels of collective efficacy (adjusted for composition effects), which in turn are associated with lower rates of crime. If we take the micro-macro problem seriously, an important question is, what role does the individual actor play?¹

From Social Capital to Informal Control: Positive Externalities, Norms, and Associations

Drawing from Matsueda (2013), we can specify the social psychological mechanisms by which social capital is built up and then translates into neighborhood collective efficacy through a micro-macro transition (e.g., Coleman 1990). We specify two neighborhood social systems, one that generates social capital (reciprocated exchange and intergenerational closure among neighbors), and a second that translates social capital into the capacity to solve problems collectively. We begin with the system generating social capital, and start with reciprocated exchange—the most elementary form of social capital. Residents exchange favors and information for instrumental reasons—borrowing tools to fix the plumbing, lending a hand to fix a car, helping to pull out a tree.

A neighborhood containing a high percentage of residents who each have preferences for being neighborly, identify with the neighborhood, and have incentives for exchanging favors and information, will be rich in social capital. The creation of neighborhood social capital also contains an emergent process in which, through social interaction, social capital builds on itself. Within a neighborhood, some key residents may become *aware* of the relationship between dense social ties and the ability of neighborhoods to solve

¹ Sampson (2012) recently emphasizes the micro-macro transition with respect to residents selecting neighborhoods; here we show how neighborhood social capital and collective efficacy constitute a micro-macro transition.

shared problems collectively. That is, they may become aware of the public goods aspect of social capital. They may recognize that some residents are relatively isolated, and understand that if they were more involved, the neighborhood would be better off. Consequently, they gain an incentive to encourage those isolated residents to become involved, and urge their neighborhood friends to encourage isolates similarly. Over time, they may convert some neighbors with persuasion and rewards in the form of informal approval such as smiles, pats on the back, and kudos, while at the same time questioning, gossiping about, or even demeaning neighbors who remain isolated. The creation of norms of being neighborly, in turn, reinforces the neighborhood as a generalized other and the salience of the role-identity of being a good neighbor. In this way, neighborhood social capital may increase over and above the sum of effects of individual preferences and incentives to develop social ties.

The second social system translates social capital into purposive social action on behalf of the neighborhood. The accumulation of social capital in a neighborhood has a positive externality: it facilitates purposive action by residents. But how is this potential activated concretely? We begin with the problem of informal social control of youth. When youths engage in behavior deemed undesirable by the community, a resident can try to intervene by drawing attention to the behavior, speaking to the youth, or physically interceding. But intervening is costly not just in time and effort, but also because the youth may object, threaten, or fight back. If the undesirable behavior is costly to the resident—such as vandalizing the resident's property or victimizing the resident's family—the cost of intervening is likely outweighed by the potential return to acting. If the undesirable behavior is costly to a different resident, or only to the neighborhood at large—such as vandalizing a street light—the cost of intervening may be too steep for an individual to act in isolation. Therefore, a feature of collective efficacy would be the presence of mechanisms to reduce the costs of intervention by acting collectively. Efficient strategies might include jointly sanctioning in pairs, rotating monitoring among neighbors, and relying on stay-at-home parents and busybodies to monitor the neighborhood and exchange gossip about problem children. Each of these strategies is facilitated by social capital. For example, developing rotating moni-

toring, in which neighbors take turns overseeing and sanctioning, may require that all committed residents contribute their share of monitoring, and therefore, take the form of an assurance game. Here, in a two-person, repeated game, the key is developing trust of others because if players are trustworthy, each knows the other will contribute and they will attain the optimal equilibrium of mutual cooperation (Kollock 1998). Thus, neighborhoods rich in reciprocated exchange will have built up the requisite trust to optimize such assurance games.

Another example is monitoring and sanctioning of neighborhood children, which is facilitated by intergenerational closure of social networks. If parents know the parents of their children's friends, they can coordinate their monitoring and sanctioning with other parents, presenting a united front, and sanctioning consistently (Coleman 1990). Some parents may get to know the parents of their children's friends as a byproduct of social activities; the resulting social capital can be used strategically for monitoring their children. Other parents may become aware of such effects and intentionally seek out the parents of their children's friends. Monitoring and sanctioning is facilitated by the dissemination of information—another form of social capital—relevant to controlling youth, including negative gossip about local problem youth. A strong gossip network can be crucial for neighborhood informal social control by providing information and reducing the costs of monitoring and sanctioning (Merry 1984).

Of course, some residents may realize that they can enjoy the fruits of neighborhood social capital—because it has a public goods aspect—and refrain from building social ties or monitoring youth. They have an incentive to free ride on the actions of others. To reduce the number of free riders, other residents might provide selective incentives, such as informal approval or disdain, and even coordinate sanctioning in pairs, which is facilitated by social ties between pair members (Olson 1971). An even more efficient way of eliciting compliance would be to create a norm—a general rule backed by collective sanctions—prescribing being “neighborly.” Such a norm requires building a working consensus over the value of being neighborly and monitoring youth, transferring control from individual residents to the neighborhood as a whole, and sanctioning

violators. This working consensus, in turn, requires communication and social ties, and thus is facilitated by neighborhood social capital. In this way, forms of social capital (norms and sanctions) build on other forms (social ties). The use of informal social approval, which would be less costly than the use of punishment, will be more effective in neighborhoods with greater social networks—particularly closed network structures (see Coleman 1990: 318)—allowing joint sanctioning. When interactions are repeated, residents care about their local reputations, and simple sanctions, such as kudos have value for recipients (Kollock 1998). Moreover, informal social approval has the potential of transforming monitoring and sanctioning into zealous behavior: here, enforcers would have a two-fold gain in benefits—the intrinsic reward of helping to reform and deter youth and the secondary reward of receiving social approval from other residents (Coleman 1990). Because of this multiplier effect, neighbors will respond by sanctioning each other with zeal, which in turn, reinforces residents to identify with the neighborhood, strengthens role-identities of being a good neighbor, and motivates them to intervene when local problems arise. In highly efficacious neighborhoods, such identities and corresponding norms are sufficiently strong that intervening in neighborhood problems becomes automatic.

Structural Disadvantage, Cultural Adaptation, and Inner-City Violence

We define culture narrowly as the symbolic meanings, interpretations, and norms attached to behavior, and argue that it constitutes a key component of neighborhood organization in favor of violence. Thrasher's (1927) ethnographic studies of gangs revealed a gang culture consisting of a universe of discourse including a gang code of conduct that exerts informal control over the group, and definitions of situations conducive to delinquency that go unchallenged. Shaw and McKay (1969) developed the concept of cultural transmission—in which a cohort of street youth pass on a delinquent tradition, consisting of delinquent values, norms, and pressures to younger cohorts—to help explain the persistence of inner city delin-

quency. Sutherland's (1937) study of professional theft showed that professional thieves viewed their theft as an occupation, valued street or larceny smarts, and lived by a criminal code, which proscribed ratting out a fellow thief, holding out on the group, or not splitting gains equally. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argued that when legitimate opportunity structures are weak and illegitimate opportunity structures are strong, conventional role-identities lose salience, criminal role-identities gain salience, and subcultural adaptations, including criminal rackets and violence, are likely.

In her study of an inner-city Latino neighborhood, Horowitz (1983) identifies two distinct cultural codes. The instrumental code of the American Dream, organized around economic success, is espoused by community members, but conflicts with the reality of negative experiences in lower class schools and available jobs, each of which fail to link residents to the broader culture. The code of honor, organized around respect, manhood, and deference, is espoused by young men on the streets; violations of the code can lead to violence. The street identities of young men are shaped by their responses to insult, negotiations of threats to manhood, and ability to maintain honor. Latino youth must balance the instrumental code of the American Dream (which requires being "decent" from the standpoint of the larger community) against the honor code of the streets (which entails gaining status in ways often violent and illegal).

In his study of an inner-city African-American neighborhood in Philadelphia, Elijah Anderson (1999) provides perhaps the most vivid description of a cultural code of the street. Anderson argues that the "code of the street" is rooted in the local circumstances of ghetto poverty as described by Wilson's underclass thesis: Structural conditions of concentrated poverty, joblessness, racial stigma, and drug use lead to alienation and a sense of hopelessness among young black males in the inner-city, which in turn, spawn an oppositional culture consisting of norms calling for violence. Structural disadvantages prevent young black inner-city males from gaining respect and esteem from school and work, which puts them at risk of embracing street culture. Negative interactions with the police—the most visible agents of conventional institutions—causes disadvantaged youth to distrust all institutions, particularly the legal system, for addressing their local problems and disputes, increasing the like-

likelihood that they will take the law into their own hands. Because structural disadvantage and police targeting disproportionately affects young men, resolutions to disputes emphasize hyper-masculinity, physical prowess, and violence.

The conjunction of these processes produces the “code of the street.” Distrustful of police, inner-city youth must rely on their own resources for addressing interpersonal problems. Lacking material resources, they have little recourse other than resorting to violence and aggression to resolve disputes. Violence becomes institutionalized within this social system on the streets, which serves the twin functions of resolving disputes and allocating status outside of conventional institutions. This system is governed by specific norms about violence, which comprise the code, the content of which echoes the findings of earlier subcultural theorists. The multiplicity of underlying norms gives the code multiple dimensions or domains of meaning.

The most fundamental norm is “never back down from a fight.” Backing down will not only result in a loss of street credibility and status, but will also increase the likelihood of being preyed upon in the future: Therefore, people often feel constrained not only to stand up and at least attempt to resist during an assault but also to “pay back”—to seek revenge—after a successful assault on their person. Revenge may include retaliating with a weapon or even getting relatives and friends involved. This process presupposes a norm of reciprocity, in which one is expected to respond in kind when disrespected by name-calling, challenges, assaults, etc. The norm of reciprocity and never backing down apply to peers, gangs, and family members. When a peer is threatened or assaulted, other group members must never run or “punk out.” The phrase “I got your back,” illustrates this norm of peers standing up for each other, which frees members to aggress against others with impunity. At times, status is allocated based on violent acts against outsiders in the neighborhood, such as members of other racial groups, which simultaneously increases the offender’s status as well as the neighborhood’s, as in the “defended communities” thesis (e.g., Suttles 1968). Thus, there is a fluid relationship between an individual and his group or crew.

Status on the street is achieved by developing a reputation as a “man,” or “badass.” Manhood is associated with being willing to express disrespect for other males—for example, by getting in their face, throwing the first punch, pulling the trigger, messing with their woman—and thereby risking retaliation. Katz (1988) argues that “badasses” demonstrate a “superiority of their being” by dominating and forcing their will on others, and showing that they “mean it.” Lacking the requisite human, social, and cultural capital needed gain status and self-respect within conventional institutions, street youth find opportunities for gaining status on the streets by showing nerve, dominating others, and exacting revenge. Group status and the status of members are reflexively tied: not only does group status confer status on each member, but members’ acts of courage and bravado provide additional status to the group.

Street youth recognize this status system and manipulate it instrumentally to increase their status, or “juice,” by “campaigning for respect”—challenging or assaulting others, disrespecting others, or provoking others by stealing their material possessions or girlfriends. The proliferation of guns onto the streets has raised the stakes: guns not only provide a quick and often final resolution to a dispute, but also level the playing field, allowing less physical youth to compete for status if they are willing to “pull the trigger.” Guns can instantly transform a minor dispute over a stare, bump, or swearword into a deadly act. Guns become a valued commodity, infused with symbols of toughness, power, and dominance, and thereby an indication of repute and esteem (see Matsueda, Drakulich, & Kubrin 2006).

The code regulates and organizes violence on the streets. As an institutional feature of street life, it produces a strong incentive to acquire knowledge of its tenets not only for “street” youth—whose identities are tied to the street—but “decent” youth—whose identities are tied to conventional roles—as well. Those familiar with the code will know how to project a self-image as “not to be messed with,” how to prevent confrontations by avoiding eye contact with others, how to talk one’s way out of a dispute without violence or loss of respect. Naïve youth ignorant of the code will unwittingly invite confrontations, appear to be easy prey, and be unable to escape altercations unharmed. They risk victimization by violence.

Thus, knowledge of the code serves a protective function for all youth, regardless of whether they participate in the street culture. It pays for decent youth to invest in the cultural capital of the street—“street efficacy” (Sharkey 2006)—to avoid hot spots and staging grounds, talk one’s way out of a confrontation, and comport oneself as “not to be messed with.” This implies that the “code of the street” is an objective property of the neighborhood, rather than merely a subjective property of the individuals inhabiting the neighborhood.

We can conceptualize this social system in terms of the micro-macro problem. Macro level processes produce an urban underclass in large cities of the U.S—as discussed earlier—generating a concentration of impoverished and disadvantaged African-American youth in residentially segregated neighborhoods. A macro-level outcome is the innovation of the code of the street, a social system that allocates status based on physical prowess and produces high rates of inner-city street violence. We can specify the microfoundations of such a system. The macro-processes underlying the urban underclass produce a critical mass of disadvantaged youth cut off from the social status conferred by conventional institutions. For such youth, any alternate path to gaining status, respect, and a sense of self-worth is attractive. The presence of the code of the street provides such an alternative, enticing young men to invest in personal capital (physical prowess, nerve, and street smarts), social capital (being a member of a respected group), and cultural capital (knowing the tenets of the code) necessary for success on the street. They may campaign for respect, initially preying on easy foes to build up street credibility. For the social system of the street, the primordial mechanism for allocating status is the violent confrontation. Street confrontations are bilateral interactions that take on the character of a game of chicken: one youth insults another, and the other has a decision to save face and respond in kind or back down and risk losing street credibility. The confrontation is a zero-sum game, in which the winner—and the members of his group—gain status and the loser—and the members of his group—lose status. Losers have an incentive to retaliate against the winner to recover their status. These changes in status presuppose the existence of social networks on the street which transmit information about the confrontation and, in particular, information relevant to reputations.

Each confrontation, change in status, and transmission of the changes reconstitutes the social system and reaffirms the norms making up the code of the street. Using network analysis of gang homicides in Chicago, Papachristos (2009) finds evidence of retaliation and social contagion in the institutionalized network of group conflict.

Violent behavior within the neighborhood is not merely an individual process in which a youth internalizes the code and thereby becomes motivated to attack others. There is also a contextual—in this case a neighborhood—effect due to the status system governed by the code. For example, an individual may not espouse the code, but in a neighborhood dominated by the code, be drawn into violence through confrontations by status enhancers. Even those who reject the code, and its prescription for violence as a way of resolving disputes, may still have difficulty turning the other cheek when challenged in public. Conversely, young males who are heavily invested in the code, who derive a sense of self from their street reputations, and whose very being is on the line during a street altercation, are at high risk of violence in a variety of situations. Place them on the streets governed by the code, and that risk escalates dramatically. Decent youth who reject the code, whose sense of self is not tied to the streets, and who prefer nonviolence are likely to avoid the street. Nevertheless, when placed in a staging ground they may have to resort to violence to save a modicum of face when other alternatives—such as trying to talk one's way out of the situation—fail. Whether the youth brings a commitment to the code, a sense of self tied to the streets, or a violent predisposition depends on their biographical history, and in particular, their experiences that shaped their identities, preferences, and beliefs.

Normative systems such as the code of the street emerge from ideas in conventional culture surrounding a masculine identity. In the U.S., cultural stereotypes of being a man include being strong, displaying courage, enduring pain, demonstrating physical prowess, and never showing weakness (Anderson 1999; Messerschmidt 1993). At an early age, boys are rewarded for being aggressive. During adolescence, male hierarchies develop in which physical prowess—athleticism and fighting—are important dimensions. Boys challenge other boys in winner-take-all tournaments in which winners gain status and a reputation, while losers suffer a loss of sta-

tus. Such status hierarchies exist on most playgrounds and recreation centers and allocate status to adolescent males at a time when they are between childhood dependency and adult roles. In the transition to adulthood, most young men develop alternative ways of attaining status and respect within conventional institutions—at school, on the job, in marriage, and in fatherhood. The status system based on physical prowess recedes in importance, only occasionally reappearing in rare confrontations. Backing down from a fight becomes a possibility because one's identity is derived less from status in hyper-masculine displays on the streets, and more from participating in conventional activities within traditional institutions. Conversely, street youth who have few opportunities to gain status in conventional realms, who live the code, and who have everything to lose, cannot conceive of backing down from a fight in public. With strong emotion and little deliberative cognition, they will respond with violence.

Crime Across the Life Course

Theories of self and identity can help explain not only criminal patterns that vary between individuals and groups, but also those that vary over time within individuals. Over the last two decades social scientists have examined how crime varies across a person's life span, integrating life course theories with criminological theory. Life-course criminology represents the cumulative research efforts in sociology, criminology, and psychology to understand the patterns of onset, continuity, and desistance from crime over the course of an individual's lifetime, and to identify important structural and social-psychological correlates associated with trajectories of criminal participation (e.g., Laub & Sampson 2003; Sampson & Laub 1993).

Sampson and Laub (1993) made pioneering contributions to life course criminology by proposing that individual criminal propensities are not immutable, but can be redirected by the creation or disruption of an individual's ties to conventional society. Ties to pro-social people and organizations exert informal social control, constraining individuals to refrain from crime. The absence of such

social ties can “free” individuals to engage in criminal behavior. Sampson and Laub (1993) posited that certain life events, termed “turning points,” can disrupt and re-order deviant behavioral trajectories by bonding the previously deviant individual to pro-social situations and people. Turning points supply individuals with situations that reorganize their social network to include non-deviant members, allow for success and fulfillment in conventional arenas, and require investment of time and energy that competes with time and energy spent on deviant pursuits. Each of these processes increases the likelihood of desistance from crime. In particular, Sampson and Laub, and many others, have identified legitimate employment, military service, marriage, and childbearing as key turning points away from criminal behavior.

More recently, criminological life-course theories have been augmented by research on the social-psychological processes that undergird pathways to desistance. In their follow-up study, Laub and Sampson (2003) included individual agency and the interaction between the individual and the structure imposed by the “turning points,” in their model of desistance over the life course. Recent work by Maruna (2001), and Giordano, Schroeder, and Cerkevich (2007), among others, on the role of self-identity and emotions in shaping desistance trajectories has expanded on a symbolic-interactionist perspective (Matsueda & Heimer 1997), and extended Sampson and Laub’s theory. This new perspective emphasizes the role of specific meanings of life events, which may constitute additional mechanisms by which life events such as marriage or employment lead to desistance.

According to symbolic interactionism, a major causal mechanism by which life events produce desistance is a shift in self-identity. For an individual to perceive, create, and capitalize on structural opportunities to desist from crime, she must interpret those opportunities as feasible, positive, and desirable, and then create a new self-identity aligned with the new social roles (Giordano et al. 2002). Turning points provide opportunities for new role-identities and pro-social interactions with others that further reinforce the salience of new non-criminal roles (Giordano et al. 2007; Stets 2006). Thus, marriage may provide a supportive partner who sees the best in the spouse, as well as reorient everyday routines to be focused

more on home life. Becoming a parent may isolate an individual from a life of parties, risky and law-breaking behavior, and delinquent peers who supported their criminal actions, and simultaneously provide a sense of pride in their new caretaker role (Edin & Kefalus 2005). In this way, emotions and role-taking that result from a life-course role-change mediate the effect of the role change on desistance (Giordano et al. 2007). In sum, both the event and the interpretation of the event as desirable, accepted by others, and supportive of a conventional identity are necessary for desistance from criminal behavior. As we show below, inequality can affect both the exposure to turning points, and the ability to capitalize on turning points by interpreting them positively.

The following section highlights some research in life-course criminology, with an emphasis on the social-psychological underpinnings of the relationship between inequality and crime over the life-span. Drawing on writings of Matsueda and Heimer (1997) and Giordano et al. (2002, 2007), we specify a pragmatist theory of identity and role-taking as key mechanisms that explain how inequality produces patterns of crime across the life span. We focus on how the interplay between social structure and self-identity along key age-graded transitions creates trajectories of criminal participation and desistance.

Patterns of Onset, Persistence, and Desistance

Life course criminologists find a consistent pattern of crime rates across the life span. Specifically, from the age of culpability (about age 7), crime begins at a low rate, increases precipitously until the peak years of about 15-25 (depending on the crime), and then falls slowly across the remaining years of age. The age-crime curve includes variation in age of onset, persistence, and desistance (see Moffitt 1993). Adolescent aggression, property offenses, and substance abuse are strongly positively associated with criminal behavior later in life (Farrington 1986). Indeed, the correlation between childhood and adult aggression appears as stable as that of IQ (e.g., Caspi, Elder & Bem 1987; Farrington 1991), reaching as high as .63. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) interpret this pattern as suggest-

ing that crime is a stable, relatively unchanging trait to be explained with other stable, relatively unchanging traits. By contrast, Sampson and Laub (1993) interpret the pattern as suggesting that nearly two-thirds of the temporal change in delinquency is in need of explanation. On this point, Nagin and Paternoster (2000) point out that stability in delinquency can be decomposed into two elements: unobserved heterogeneity, which captures stable individual differences, versus state dependence, which captures the lagged effect of being in a state (e.g., delinquent) in one period on remaining in that state in the next period.

Research finds that aggression, fighting, and violence exhibit an S-shaped curve of onset, with the steepest increase between the ages of 12 and 14 (Farrington 1986). Property crime exhibits a slightly earlier age of onset than aggression, while the use of illicit drugs has a later age of onset, peaking in early adulthood (Kandel 1991). There is evidence that early onset of delinquent behavior is associated with more adult criminal behavior (e.g., Krohn et al. 2001). Others argue that early onset is a symptom of other risk factors for delinquency (Nagin & Farrington 1992), rather than a direct cause of greater delinquent behavior (Moffitt 1993). Finally, although less research focuses on individuals who begin their criminal careers in adulthood, as much as half of adult offenders are adult-onset offenders (Eggleston & Laub 2002).

Criminal desistance is a process that is hard to define and measure, as individuals can exhibit multiple cycles of long periods of desistance followed by renewed criminal participation (Laub & Sampson 2003). Nevertheless, systematic studies of desistance over the life-course indicate that, upon reaching elderly status, virtually all individuals permanently desist from criminal behavior. Offenses that peak earliest—like property crime—also show a more precipitous decline than violence or drug and alcohol related crimes (Steffensmeier et al. 1989). Trends in desistance for young and middle-age adults are associated with the transition to adult roles, such as becoming employed, getting married, and having a child. For those who continue to offend until the twilight years, desistance is most certainly associated with a reduced capacity for the skills necessary for crime (Laub & Sampson 2003).

The ubiquity of the shape of the age-crime curve led Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) to claim the basic shape is invariant across history, nations, and social groups. Others, however, have noted that this general trend may be composed of multiple distinct patterns of individual trajectories. Moffit (1993) suggested that offenders fall into one of two groups: (1) adolescence-limited offenders, who engage in delinquency during the adolescent period only; and (2) life-course persistent offenders, who remain at risk of serious crime throughout the life span. She hypothesized that adolescence-limited offenders are normal youth who mimic the antisocial behavior of early-maturing offenders as a normal part of adjusting to adolescence. By contrast, life-course persistent offenders suffer from neurological deficits that make them at risk of crime across the lifespan, and select for criminogenic environments, increasing the risk of crime through cumulative continuity. Researchers have used latent class trajectory models to search for distinct trajectory groups but have typically identified four to six distinct groups that only loosely approximate Moffit's taxonomy (for a review, see Piquero 2008). This has led to a controversy in which some have argued that Moffit's taxonomy is not empirically supported and that group-based trajectory models have yet to yield theoretically meaningful results (e.g., Sampson & Laub 2005). Others contend that group-based trajectory models provide important descriptive information about unobserved heterogeneity in offending (e.g., Nagin & Tremblay 2005). This controversy has not been settled definitively, although researchers are more cautious in applying and interpreting group-based trajectory models, and alternative statistical models are beginning to appear (e.g., Telesca et al. 2013).

The results of this descriptive research on the components of the age-crime curve, along with research on the life span, suggests that childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are important stages in which delinquency and crime vary over the life span. We discuss each in turn.

Childhood: Family, Parenting, and Anti-Social Behavior

During childhood, family relationships and parenting shape future trajectories of delinquency, and perhaps help mediate genetic predispositions to aggression (Guo, Roettger & Cai 2008). Parental disciplinary strategies that emphasize warmth, close supervision, and a child's psychological autonomy are associated with less delinquency in adolescence, which, in turn, is associated with less crime in adulthood (Gershoff 2002; Lamborn et al. 1991; Steinberg & Morris 2001). These parenting strategies—termed “authoritative parenting” by Baumrind (1967)—provide children with a key balance of support and structure, building an appreciation of consequences of independent action while building self-confidence through independent thinking (Gray & Steinberg 1999). Most research has emphasized the effects of parenting practices as exogenous predictors of child behavior. Parenting, however, is likely the result of a social interaction between parent and child, in which children play an important role by exercising agency (Scarr 1992). For example, parental monitoring entails not only how parents accomplish surveillance, but also how children manage information about their private behavior (Stattin & Kerr 2000). Parenting and child agency intertwine as children take on a range of roles in reaction to parental behavior. For example, children of criminal parents may identify with their parents, see themselves as caretakers of their parents, or intentionally create identities distinct from their parents (e.g., “I am not going to end up like my parent”) (Giordano 2010).

Such family effects may be structured by inequality. As noted earlier, inner-city disadvantaged African-American neighborhoods have high rates of female-headed households, in part due to high rates of male joblessness, drug use and incarceration. This may result in fewer opportunities to practice authoritative parenting and close monitoring of youth. Moreover, when disadvantage and non-intact family structures are spatially concentrated, opportunities for intergenerational closure—parents knowing the parents of their children's friends—are fewer. This can result in a multiplicative effect, as non-intact structures reduce opportunities for coordinated monitoring nonlinearly across the neighborhood (Sampson 1987).

Parenting and family relationships can perpetuate inequality by reproducing behavior consistent with existing social cleavages, such as race and gender. For example, differential parental socialization of males and females has been linked to formation of gendered identities, which leads to differences in behavioral outcomes such as crime (e.g., LaGrange & Silverman 1999). Parents traditionally assume that daughters are weak and in need of protection, and therefore monitor daughters more closely than sons (e.g., Svensson 2003). Meanwhile, because boys are assumed to be more troublesome, they are more likely to be labeled as bad kids or rule breakers (Bartusch & Matsueda 1996). These differential socializing signals are internalized by children, adopted as part their gender identities, and may yield significant differences in behavior. For example, as a result of socialization, and possibly innate cognitive differences, girls tend to be more risk averse than boys and, therefore, less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as delinquency (e.g., Croson & Gneezy 2009).

Growing economic inequalities, including less support to low income women with dependent children and other welfare erosions, as well as deep residential inequalities discussed above, have contributed to a rise in the number of families with children that face concentrated and lasting socioeconomic disadvantage. Socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with family stress, strained relationships between parents and children, and harsh, uninvolved, and inconsistent parenting—all of which contribute to child behavioral problems (e.g., McLanahan & Percheski 2008). Children from families lacking resources such as residential stability, nutrition, and early and extra-curricular education are at greater risk of exhibiting delinquent and problem behavior (McLanahan & Percheski 2008). Economic stress faced by impoverished parents can directly affect children negatively (e.g., Mistry et al. 2009), a result predicted by general strain theory (Agnew 1992).

When cultural differences arise as a result of economic inequalities, intergenerational mobility is particularly difficult. Inequalities in parental employment can translate into differences in parenting, which in turn affect child outcomes. In his classic studies of class and authority, Kohn (1969) found that low SES jobs reward obedience to authority, and workers tend to generalize such experi-

ences to their own parenting, stressing obedience and using coercive and physical discipline. In contrast, high SES jobs reward self-direction, and workers tend to use inductive discipline strategies, such as moral reasoning, to elicit self-direction in their children. Moreover, Heimer (1997) found that inductive parental discipline was class related, and was strongly predictive of future child violence and aggression. She found support for a cultural explanation of class, discipline, and violence: low SES youth were likely to be punished harshly by parents, which increased the likelihood that they would learn codes of violence from their peers, which in turn, explained their future violent behavior.

Recently, Lareau (2002) used qualitative methods to identify some of the nuanced ways in which advantages enjoyed by middle class parents are passed down to their children. She found that middle class families are more adept and self-assured in managing and navigating conventional institutions, such as schools and health care organizations, which are important for their children's well-being. Middle class parents both exhibit and transmit to their children the confidence, verbal repertoire, and assertiveness needed for success in such institutions. Conversely, poor and working class families lack the requisite experience, skills, and background to navigate schools, health care systems, and legal systems, which leads to feelings of powerlessness, alienation, and distrust of professionals. As a result, children from poor and working class families may lack models of how to deal with bureaucratic institutions, may internalize family values and adopt identities at odds with the value systems of such institutions, and may distrust professionals who occupy positions of power in such organizations. This paucity of social and cultural capital can lead to difficulties in school and ultimately difficulties in the labor market, both of which are positively associated with adolescent and adult crime.

Adolescence: Schools, Peers, and Delinquency

As children make the transition to adolescence, they spend more time outside of the home at school and with peers. Parental influences diminish and give way to the influence of peers, neighbor-

hoods, and schools. Parents still play a role in their children's lives, but that role is increasingly indirect via providing a framework for children to interpret experiences outside the home. Parents also provide resources that may affect their children's schooling, the neighborhoods to which they are exposed, and the peer groups with which they associate. Families, schools, and peers are overlapping social contexts affecting adolescent delinquency.

Education has been termed the "the great equalizer" for its positive effects on wages and other social and health outcomes. There is extensive research showing that attachment to school and gains in education, particularly high school graduation, are associated with significant reductions in self-reported delinquency, arrest, and incarceration (e.g., Lochner & Moretti 2004). Nevertheless, to the extent that access to educational opportunities and success are influenced by a child's socioeconomic background, schools can become a vehicle for increasing inequality. Furthermore, since 1980, returns to education have increased and, combined with skill-biased technical change, have resulted in greater wage inequality by levels of education.

Socioeconomic inequality can be exacerbated by several features of the educational system. Disadvantaged students alienated from school fail to incorporate conventional school organization, expectations, and rules into their generalized other, leading to underinvestment in school and greater risk for crime and incarceration (e.g., Hirschi 1969). Willis (1977) outlines the process through which school becomes a central site for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds to begin forming class identities. Children from poor and working class backgrounds learn "oppositional" scripts from their parents and later their peers. These scripts consist of suspicion of authorities, insubordination and other acts of delinquency, and a view of school as unnecessary and its order illegitimate. Students reproduce these scripts by acting out, skipping school, disrespecting teachers, engaging in vandalism, and excluding conforming students from their social group (see also Lareau 2002). Teachers also enact scripts that strengthen the oppositional identities of the working class kids by belittling them, withholding knowledge from them, and approaching them as pathological and unable to benefit from teaching. Once children adopt identities in opposition to

school and in alignment with working class scripts, they adjust their expectations and aspirations for future life in a manner consistent with their class membership.

Schools that serve predominantly disadvantaged populations may also be providing children with a structure and curriculum less conducive to future success. Schools in low SES neighborhoods tend to compete poorly with affluent schools, exhibiting low retention rates and poor student performance on standardized tests (Arum 2000). Children from low SES families may experience additional resource-based barriers to education, such as being excluded from extracurricular school-based activities and programs to address learning disabilities (Lareau 2002). In sum, poor education, lack of continuity between school roles and home roles, and lack of immersion in school activities through barriers to extracurricular participation, may all contribute to a weak commitment to child's identity as a student, causing them to underinvest in school. The law-abiding conventional organization of the school is not a part of the child's generalized other. Students who get better grades, who do their homework, and who demonstrate strong commitment to their schools are less likely to be delinquent (e.g., Hirschi 1969). High school dropouts are particularly at risk of future criminality (Thornberry, Moore, & Christenson 1985). Thus, although schools generally provide opportunities for students to develop the requisite skills for success in a conventional lifestyle, they also contain subtle mechanisms of reproducing inequality and generating crime and deviance.

One of the strongest and most consistent correlates of delinquency is membership in delinquent peer groups, although recent research using network data suggests that the association between self-reported delinquency and peer delinquency has been overestimated in the past due to a bias of over-reporting of similarities between self-reports and reports of friends' behavior (e.g. Haynie 2001). Control theorists suggest that the association between delinquent peers and delinquency is due to peer selection: low self-control causes delinquency, and also leads to befriending other peers with low self-control who are at risk of delinquency (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990). However, there is evidence that the association between delinquent peers and delinquency is not a result of selection of

delinquent adolescents into peer groups with like others, but is a result of both selection and social influence (e.g., Haynie 2001; Matsueda & Anderson 1998). Specifically, delinquency is transmitted via social influence such as peer pressure, group status conferred to delinquents, and transmission of codes of violence from older youths to younger children (e.g., Warr 2002; Weerman 2011). Compared to other peer groups, delinquent groups tend to be neighborhood-based, rather than school centered (Kreager, Rulison, & Moody 2011), a pattern of friendships particularly common for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Increased residential inequality and segregation compound the effects of family disadvantage. Lack of resources (such as access to transportation) limits disadvantaged youths' ability to participate in extracurricular activities, or befriend peers who live in different neighborhoods (Harding 2009). Consequently, peer interactions of disadvantaged youths are limited to their neighborhoods of residence, which are more likely to have strong norms of violence, low rates of intergenerational closure, and weak informal social controls. This leads to an increase in the likelihood of befriending older peers, identifying strongly with the neighborhood, defending the neighborhood from incursions by outsiders (Harding 2009), and adopting neighborhood codes of violence (Anderson 1999). Here, selves may be dominated by a generalized other that is neighborhood oriented and prone to violent conflict resolution.

There is evidence that the effects of peers on delinquency declines with age, possibly because as they get older, individuals become increasingly immune from peer influences in their decision making, including decisions to commit criminal acts. Another view posits that as individuals age, peers from adolescence decrease in salience, as they are replaced by new influential others, such as spouses and colleagues (Warr 2002). Such changes in the salience of others are linked to age-graded role transitions that accompany adulthood.

Transition to Adulthood: Employment, Marriage, Parenthood

As youths age into adulthood, they encounter multiple age-graded role transitions, many of which are associated with desistance from crime, contributing to the long decline in the age-crime curve. One key transition, stable employment, is not only associated with desistance from crime (Sampson & Laub 1993), but also has a significant negative effect on adult-onset criminal behavior (Eggleston & Laub 2002). Stable employment provides networks of coworkers who are on average non-criminal, supplies a steady wage, and demands time and energy that otherwise might be used for illegal activities. The result is a reorganization of life away from crime and the development of a non-criminal identity embedded in non-criminal groups. Quality of employment matters: jobs in the secondary sector of the labor market tend to be sporadic, unskilled, low-wage, and high-stress jobs, which do little to dissuade low-skill workers from crime (e.g., Crutchfield 1989; Fagan & Freeman 1999). This effect of employment quality is supported by experimental evidence from the National Supported Work Demonstration Project, showing that secondary sector jobs had little effect on crime. The project randomly assigned chronically unemployed ex-offenders, drug addicts, and high school dropouts to a treatment consisting of jobs—mostly secondary-sector jobs—versus a control group. While there was some evidence of treatment heterogeneity, overall, the jobs made little difference in self-reported crime or arrest during the 27-month follow-up period (see Hollister, Kemper, & Maynard 1984).

Concentrated disadvantage at the neighborhood level, especially in those neighborhoods most gutted by mass incarceration (Rose & Clear 1998) reduces opportunities to obtain rewarding jobs that could become triggers for desistance, both due to paucity of proximal job openings, and the lack of employment-related social capital in resident networks. As concentrated disadvantage generates legal cynicism, codes of violence, and criminal behavior patterns in local communities, social networks become dominated with information conducive to illegal activity.

In addition to work, other key life transitions include marriage and parenthood. Stable marriages, characterized by attach-

ment, caring, and affection are associated with desistance from crime (Sampson & Laub 1993), but this effect is stronger for men than for women. A conventional spouse can provide a change in routine, and support necessary for adoption of a non-criminal identity. The roles associated with a transition to marriage may be especially salient due to the strong positive emotions that accompany the role-taking induced by marriage (Giordano et al. 2007). Research on marriage and desistance consistently finds that the quality of marriage matters—satisfying and stable marriages are associated with greater desistance (e.g., Laub, Nagin & Sampson 1998).

The effect of marriage on desistance, however, may be conditioned by inequality, due to the links between inequality and both assortative mating processes and reductions of marriage quality due to experiences of extreme disadvantage. There is evidence that growth in inequality can be at least partially accounted by the increases in economic assortative mating (e.g. Breen & Salazar 2011). Studies also indicate that assortative mating extends to residential proximity, as well as criminal behavior (Knight 2011). Greater homophily in selection of marriage partners may mean that individuals who have problems with finances or criminal behavior, or who live in neighborhoods characterized by extreme disadvantage, are more likely to enter into partnerships with similarly disadvantaged others, which may undermine the positive effects of marriage. Experiences of severe financial strain have been linked to delay of marriage, marital strain, and divorce (Bradley & Corwyn 2002; McLanahan & Percheski 2008), all of which may be associated with crime. Finally, ex-felons are considered less desirable marriage partners and, therefore, will be less likely to experience the potential “turning point” of marriage (Western 2006).

While marriage has been linked to desistance in males, the role of becoming a parent has been linked to desistance in female offenders from disadvantaged neighborhoods (Kreager, Matsueda & Erosheva 2010). For disadvantaged women, the motherhood and caretaker role entails a concern for the future of the child, which is incompatible with continued illicit drug use and other illegal behaviors that could leave the child unattended, separated, or unsupported. Moreover, motherhood illustrates Giordano et al.’s (2002) concept of “hooks for change”: for disadvantaged women, having child can

be a transformative event in their lives, giving their lives new meaning, and allowing them to adopt new identities as a caretaker, mother, and provider. That new identity is often accompanied by a change of reference group—away from friends and boyfriends who partake in the nightlife, consume recreational illicit drugs, and frequent situations conducive to crime, and toward other young mothers who share the concerns and feelings of being a new parent (see Anderson 1999; Edin & Kefalas 2005).

In sum, inequality, particularly the form of inequality generated by an expanding urban underclass, structures the timing and effects of age-graded transitions on criminal behavior within a person's lifetime. Inequality affects crime both through reducing access to pro-social institutions, situations, and people, and also through conditioning responses to such pro-social opportunities. Moreover, life-course transitions build upon each other: Once a person commits crime as a result of initial disadvantage, they are likely to face disadvantage and reduced legitimate opportunities throughout their lives, making it harder to desist. Processes like these generate greater inequality in opportunities and behavior as people move through life. The next section details the consequences of incarceration for opportunity structures and inequality—a stark example of self-reinforcing process of cumulative disadvantage, inequality, and crime.

Consequences of Incarceration for Inequality

Over the last 40 years, the policy response to crime has shifted away from rehabilitation and diversion to more punitive measures emphasizing incarceration. Most criminologists agree that mass incarceration by itself is an ineffective policy to combat crime. Nevertheless, with policies such as “three strikes,” mandatory minimum sentences, and the war on drugs, we have seen an unprecedented expansion of incarceration in recent years. Over the past three decades, the incarceration rate in the U.S. has increased by over 400 percent, up to 751 per 100,000 in 2006, the highest rate in the world since 2002 (Wakefield & Uggen 2010). The U.S. penal system has expanded to include 1% of its population, with an additional 2% constituted by pa-

rolees or those serving probation (Wakefield & Uggen 2010; Western 2006). Mass incarceration has disproportionately affected African-American men with little education. Only 3.2% of white men experienced incarceration by the ages of 30-34; the figure for African-American men is 22%. Over half of all black men without a high school degree experience incarceration by the ages of 30-34 (Pettit & Western 2004). Without question, differences in behavior account for much of the racial, educational, and gender differentials in incarceration (Daly & Tonry 1997; Pettit & Western 2004; Wakefield & Uggen 2010). Nevertheless, most social scientists would argue that behavioral differences alone are unlikely to account for all of the disparities (e.g., Western 2006). In particular, unequal targeting of criminal behavior perpetrated by disadvantaged and minority populations helps explain differences in arrest rates that remain after behavioral differences are taken into account (Tonry & Melewski 2008). Racial and gender bias in criminal justice processing have also been shown to modestly affect incarceration rate disparities. Research finds that, in the absence of complete information, judicial decision makers invoke stereotypical gendered and racial status characteristics when making calculations about an offender's dangerousness and culpability (e.g., Steen, Engen & Gainey 2005). Being black is associated with expectations of increased dangerousness and culpability, while being female is associated with expectations of being a victim, and as presenting less of a threat.

Regardless of their precise source, differences in incarceration rates translate into inequalities in opportunity, occupational mobility, and well-being. Recent research on the effects of incarceration highlights why it is a particularly powerful institution of inequality: Once experienced, the effects of state punishment are pernicious and lasting, often permanently stifling the upward mobility of those with a criminal record, their families, and children. The acquisition of a criminal record has been shown to stigmatize individuals, reduce returns from legal employment, strip individuals of social rights even after the official punishment has been served, and make it harder to start and support families. The following sections describe some of the ways in which unequal contact with the system of formal punishment creates lasting inequalities in economic,

health, and social outcomes. These continued penalties reduce opportunities for advancement, solidifying positions of disadvantage for those populations that disproportionately bear the brunt of mass incarceration.

A felony record typically reduces an individual's employment and earnings potential—sometimes permanently. Ex-felons are less likely to be employed, and when employed, tend to be earn lower wages (Fagan & Freeman 1992; Western & Beckett 1999). To control for potentially confounding effects of human capital between ex-felons and non-felons, Pager (2003) used a quasi-experimental audit study to test the effect of a criminal record on employment. She found that non-felons were twice as likely as ex-felons to get a callback. That effect was greater for black ex-felons (although not significantly so), suggesting that incarceration can increase inequality between groups, not just through disproportionate targeting of one group over the other, but also through differential effects on different groups.

Furthermore, a felony conviction revokes the right to be employed in several occupations, and can be grounds for denial of such welfare programs as subsidized housing and financial aid to mothers with children (Wakefield & Uggen 2010). This exacerbates the already precarious financial situation of most ex-felons. Legal debt, as well as the high interest rate that usually accompanies it, reduces income, overall solvency, and potential for wealth accumulation of ex-prisoners, who are often already economically marginalized (Harris et al. 2010). Thus, as personal wealth and employment opportunities diminish, ex-prisoners are trapped in positions of economic disadvantage, with bleak prospects for upward mobility.

In most states in the U.S., felony status results in a sometimes permanent loss of voting rights (Manza & Uggen 2006). The most straight-forward implication of this penalty is that ex-felons, as a group, become less politically powerful, unable to elect political figures who would protect and serve their interests. To the extent that ex-felons are overly represented within certain sub-populations (being black or affiliating with the Democratic Party), felon disenfranchisement weakens the political power of such groups. Conversely, as prisons and correctional facilities have expanded as a result of the steep growth in incarceration, employees of correctional

facilities come to constitute a large, organized, and influential group whose lobbying efforts have induced state legislatures to promote further penal expansion (Beckett 1997).

These negative consequences of punishment can have spillover effects on other social and health outcomes. Incarceration appears to reduce a person's marriageability as well as the ability to parent and support children effectively (Comfort 2007; Lopoo & Western 2006; Western 2006). By adversely affecting parenting and partnership, the experience of incarceration extends beyond the offender to family members who have committed no crimes (Comfort 2007). Foster and Hagan (2007) find that daughters of incarcerated fathers have heightened risk of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and homelessness, and that both sons and daughters have lower educational attainment and higher probabilities of contact with the juvenile and adult criminal justice system. Research using data from the Fragile Families Study, which allows for accurate measurement of the timing of parental incarceration, finds that father's incarceration results in a significant reduction of child financial support (Geller et al. 2009), and is predictive of greater levels of sons' aggression (Wildeman 2010).

In the U.S., several states terminate an inmate's parenting rights, as well as deny public housing and financial assistance to ex-offenders and their families (Uggen et al. 2006). As African Americans are at higher risk of contact with the criminal justice system, their families will on average experience greater net losses. Moreover, African Americans disproportionately live in states that have the harshest restrictions on provision of welfare to ex-offenders, which further reduces their ability to provide for their families after conviction (Soss et al. 2008). The narrowing gap between male and female rates of incarceration suggests that incarceration effects on children may become even more acute because women prisoners are more likely than their male counterparts to be primary care providers for dependent children (Kruttschnitt 2010).

Experiences of incarceration have also been shown to undermine physical and mental health. The disproportionate rate of incarceration for blacks versus whites has been linked to poor health outcomes among blacks when compared to whites (Massoglia 2008). The high prevalence of infectious diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis C,

and tuberculosis in prisons may contribute to health problems of those who have experienced incarceration (Wakefield & Uggen 2010). Maximum security prisons and solitary confinement can be deleterious to prisoners' mental health. The stress and stigma of incarceration may contribute to poor health outcomes of individuals after release (Schnittker & John 2007). Moreover, the effects of incarceration on health may worsen as funding for drug rehabilitation programs has declined. Finally, the denial of welfare to many ex-prisoners (Soss et al. 2008; Uggen et al. 2006) may negatively affect their ability to maintain their health upon release.

High incarceration rates in disadvantaged neighborhoods result in large proportions of residents cycling in and out of prison, which disrupts the local community (e.g., Clear 2007). On the one hand, removing an offender who has victimized other residents, has been isolated from others, and has made few contributions to the community may have a positive effect on the community as a whole. On the other hand, despite having committed a crime, local offenders may also have been fathers, neighbors, friends, employees, and consumers, and thereby have been interwoven into the fabric of the local community. Their removal from the community through incarceration has the negative spillover effect of reducing social capital by eliminating social ties within the community's social network. Ironically, this reduction in social capital may be associated with reductions in informal social control, such as collective efficacy, which in turn is associated with higher rates of crime and incarceration. Thus, a community can get caught up in a pernicious feedback loop in which incarceration undermines social control, which increases crime and incarceration, further undermining social controls. Furthermore, an influx of returning ex-prisoners into a disadvantaged community may disrupt local legal economies (shops and restaurants), reducing opportunity costs to crime, and may thereby increase the community's crime rate (e.g., Clear 2007).

In sum, the contemporary system of punishment in the U.S. appears to stigmatize offenders formally and informally upon release—and long after their official punishment is meted out. Whether it takes the form of a formal label of being unfit for employment, or an informal label of undesirable marriage partners, the long-term stigma experienced by ex-offenders serves to cut them off

from full participation in conventional society. There is increasing evidence that these lasting labels are a result, in large part, of failures to re-integrate individuals into society after they have experienced state punishment. The work of Braithwaite (1989) on re-integrative shaming, along with emergent research on the role of parole and post-release processes (e.g., Visser & Travis 2003) shows that without re-integration of ex-offenders into society formal punishment may not only foster inequality, but may also induce future criminal participation. It is our hope that, in addition to continued efforts to understand the role of incarceration in systems of stratification, future research engages the issues of harm-reduction for those who have experienced incarceration.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, we have explored the relationship between inequality and crime. Most research on inequality and crime focuses on macro-level concepts and estimates macro-level models using data on aggregate crime rates. To augment such models, we have tried to incorporate social psychological processes to provide a microfoundation for the macrorelationship between inequality and crime. Specifically, we presented an integrated multi-level social psychological theory of crime to identify both micro-foundations and specific causal mechanisms by which inequality may produce crime and deviance.

Our model, rooted in pragmatism, emphasizes how participation in organized groups—favoring or discouraging crime—produces identities, preferences, and habits that can be either promote or deter criminal behavior. Those behaviors, in turn, reinforce group processes. An example of organized groups discouraging crime appears when reciprocated exchange among neighbors produces collective efficacy, which in turn, helps control youth delinquency. An example of organized groups promoting crime appears when violent transactions on the street produce status hierarchies, violent norms, and social systems conducive to street violence.

Research reviewed here suggests that participation in organized groups, whether criminal or conventional, varies over the

lifespan, and is linked to life-long patterns of criminal participation. Onset of and desistance from crime, then, can be seen as an age-graded result of membership in organized groups. Thus, age-graded transitions into and out of institutions—including the family, education, labor market, and prison system—alter trajectories of offending by affecting group participation. Such transitions are structured by social inequality, but also help reproduce inequality. This reproduction of inequality is clearly apparent when examining mass incarceration in the U.S., which, through its disproportionate effect on African-American males, has undermined labor market outcomes, political participation, family well-being, health status, and community well-being for a large segment of the population. The result has been an exacerbation of inequality, and a preservation of inequality based on race.

Social inequality is implicated even more fundamentally in crime and incarceration. The content of criminal law, and therefore, the very definition of crime, is strongly influenced by class cleavages. People make choices about criminal behavior against the backdrop of unequal power, resources, and opportunities for upward mobility. The powerful classes tend to use their political, economic, and social clout to realize their interests in law, while disguising their class interests under the rubric of universal interests. Thus, criminal law, criminal behaviors, and punitive responses to crime are each produced in part by social inequality, and are each implicated in the reproduction of systems of social inequality.

Future research is needed to flesh out the social psychological underpinnings of inequality and crime. First, research on the complex ways in which individual action, whether toward facilitating crime or controlling crime, creates collective action and macro-level outcomes, is needed. Second, research on the concrete ways in which the legal system produces racial disparities in arrest, conviction, and incarceration is needed to go beyond what is essentially a black box. Third, research must turn to crime in the suites—white collar and corporate crimes—to gain a full understanding of inequality and the full scope of criminal behavior.

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