

## Chapter 2

# Making Sense of Social Disorganization

Crime is a common social phenomenon existing for thousands of years. Due to different political and economic system, national tradition, and cultural background, crime presents various patterns in different countries. Rapid social transition accompanying economic growth and system transformation make crime a serious social problem. Social transition affects social life in all directions and induces social disorganization in every respect. Its influence to commit crime proves easy to cause a power vacuum in social institutional change, and negatively affect on crime prevention and social control; it tends to produce negative psychological phenomena such as anomie, stress, resentment, and confusion due to disorganization and reconstruction of social order and social norms, which result in frequent anomie and deviant behavior (Zhou 2004). Altogether, crime is natural product of rapid social transition (Zhou and Cao 2007). A study on the relationship between social disorganization and crime in China has irreplaceable significance to clearly understand criminal phenomenon in periods China's social transformation. Proper crime prevention and control measures could be made through a deep study on the influences of various factors of social disorganization on crime. Thus criminal legislation could be improved.

Although social disorganization theory is one of the earliest developed sociological theories in modern Western, "social disorganization," the basic concept of social disorganization theory is still to be one of the few sociological terms with "the most confusing and most indistinct definitions" (Cohen 1959). This book creatively understands "social disorganization" on two levels: spatial structural disorganization and social structural disorganization. Because of this, the social disorganization theory will be re-annotated and step forward in a much clearer form of conceptualization.

## 2.1 Economic, Modernization and Crime

### 2.1.1 *Modernization and Crime*

Research on relationships between crime and modernization was first started by French sociologist Emile Durkheim. In 1893, Durkheim analyzed the social changes process relevant to industrialization in his famous book “The Division of labor in Society” (Durkheim 1964). Social transition was the process that “mechanical” society developed to “organic” society. When the society developed to its organic form, social morbid condition which Durkheim called “anomie” will occur. “Anomie” will lead to social pathology, including crime. Durkheim considered that crime was a “normal” social phenomenon in mechanical society and advanced the viewpoint that “crime was normal” in his second major works “Rules of the Sociological Method” (Durkheim 1964). He believed that crime is “bound up with the fundamental conditions of all social life” and serves a social function (Durkheim 1964). Subsequently, Durkheim popularized the concept of anomie in his most famous work “Suicide” (Durkheim 1951). Durkheim’s anomie theory was later used as theoretical basis to explain crime and other various deviant behaviors (Clinard 1964). Durkheim’s viewpoints are so broad and profound that he was called one of the main sociologists who were most famous and most difficult to interpret and comprehend (LaCapra 2001). Durkheim’s famous argument on modernization and crime was that when mechanical society turned to organic society in modernization, the purpose of punishment turned from repression to recovery. There will be a “functional” law widely used to regulate emerging interactions in organic society; a number of deviant behaviors will increase in organic society in rapid social transitions.

Many criminological theories were formed on basis of Durkheim’s perspectives on the relationship between crime and modernization in recent years. It can be said that basic crime patterns in modern society can only be explained by some criminal theories that use modernization as the framework (Vold 1998). Shelley (1981) reviews multiple studies relating to relationships between crime and modernization, and found that crime patterns experienced in modernization would also appear in developing countries. Furthermore, many researches were contrary with Durkheim’s predictions about relationships between modernization and crime. Durkheim believed that crime was stable, while the premodern society was characterized by a high and crime rate (Vold 1998). Violent crime rate experienced a long-term reduction in the modernization process, which was also not predicted by Durkheim’s theory (Messner 1982). Short periods of growth of violent crime rates was observed in long-term reducing trends and appeared in the early stages of urbanization and modernization. Some scholars attributed short periods of the growth of violent crime rates to war and adolescent population growth, rather than Durkheim’s rural cultural collapse (Gurr 1979, 1981).

### 2.1.2 *Economic and Crime*

Theories about relations between economic conditions and crime should be traced back to ancient societies. There is an enormous amount of research on the relations between economic conditions and crime since the modern times. In the early 1800s, attempts were made by Guerry and Quetelet to demonstrate the relationship between these two phenomena as soon as national crime statistics were available in France (Beirne 1993). Guerry found that the wealthiest regions of France had more property crime but less violent crime. He concluded that the higher levels of property crime were caused by opportunity; there were more things to steal in the wealthy provinces. Quetelet found a similar pattern and also suggested that opportunity might be a factor; however, he also pointed out that the great inequality between poverty and wealth in the more developed provinces would influence crime rates. Inequality could generate resentment among the poor, whereas in contrast, poor areas tended to have less inequality and less resentment because everyone was in the same economic bracket.

There are no unified conclusions about relationships between crime and economy despite the ongoing research and analysis (Cornwell and Trumbull 1994; Crutchfield 1989; Grant and Martinez 1997; Loftin and McDowall 1982; MacDonald 2002; Machin and Meghir 2004; Merlo 2004; Pudney et al. 2000; Samara 2005; Wong 1995).

Since that time, hundreds of studies have been published that extend back over a period of almost 200 years. These have often given complicated and apparently contradictory results. Now I will demonstrate the important discussions on the following theoretical problems: the relationship between crime and the business cycle, relationships between crime and poverty and concentrated poverty, relationships between crime and unemployment. Theoretical studies about relationships between economic conditions and crime are focused on these areas.

*Relationships between crime and business cycles* Numerous studies have been done on the relationship between crime and the business cycle. The thinking was that there should be more crime during times of economic downturns with the increase of impoverished people, and that there would be less crime during times of economic expansions (Vold 1979). Most of these studies, however, find that the general crime rate does not increase during economic recessions and depressions (Long and Witte 1981). Some studies even find the opposite situation—that crime actually decreases during such periods (Allen 1996). There is also research that dissects the relationships between economic expansion and crime and maintains that economic expansion does not necessarily lead to crime reduction (Lafree 1998). As far as the United States is concerned, economic expansion in the 1960s resulted in a rise in crime, while crime rates were reduced in the 1990s (Blumstein and Wallman 2006).

*Relationships between crime and poverty/concentrated poverty* Some researchers hold the opinion that there is no relationship between the poor population and

crime (Cho 1974). It has been found that the percentage of people below the poverty line in the forty-nine largest cities of the United States was not associated with any of the seven index crimes reported by the FBI. Jacobs (1981) reached a similar conclusion with respect to the crimes of burglary, robbery, and grand larceny. In contrast, Ehrlich found that there was a positive relationship between state property crime rates for 1940, 1950, 1960 and the percentage of households receiving less than half of the median income (Ehrlich 1974). Loftin and Hill created an index of “structural poverty” including measures of infant mortality, low education, and one-parent families. These findings resulted in a very strong correlation between this measure and the state of homicide rates (Loftin and Hill 1974).

Although poverty or unemployment may not be a direct cause of crime, areas that are the most deteriorated, even within the context of inner-city poverty, seem to have much higher crime rates than more stable lower-class environments (Massey 1996). William Julius Wilson describes how working- and middle-class families flee inner-city poverty areas, resulting in a concentration effect, in which elements of the most disadvantaged population are consolidated in urban ghettos. Urban areas marked by concentrated poverty become isolated and insulated from the social mainstream and more prone to criminal activity, violence, and homicide. Lee found that the degree of poverty concentration was more important than overall poverty rates on murder (Lee 2000). Some scholars examined the relationship between economic inequality and crime, and supposed that economic inequality is an important factor resulting in violent crime (Harer and Steffensmeier 1992). Takeuchi et al. (1991) studied the influence of family economic pressure on children’s emotion and behavior.

*Relationships between crime and economic inequality/relative deprivation* There is ample evidence that neighborhood-level income inequality is a significant predictor of neighborhood crime rates. Sharp divisions between the rich and poor create an atmosphere of envy and mistrust that may lead to violence and aggression. Generalized feelings of relative deprivation are precursors to high crime rates. According to this view, lower-class people might feel both deprived and embittered when they compare their life circumstances to those of the more affluent. The constant frustration that results from these feelings of inadequacy produces pent-up aggression and hostility, and leads to violence and crime. According to the relative deprivation theory, if income inequality widens, crime rates may spiral upward even as the size of the indigent population is in decline. Relative deprivation is truly relative. Even the most affluent Americans may feel deprived if they fail to achieve their lofty and unlimited goals, and they may use illegal means to deal with their feeling of deprivation. The relative deprivation model is important because it helps explain the ambiguous association between crime and the economy. During a recession, crime rates may fall because everyone is suffering, and consequently there are relatively few of relative deprivation.

*Relationships between crime and unemployment* Many people believe that unemployment causes crime (Berk et al. 1980), then crime should increase when unemployment is high and decrease when unemployment is low (Glaser and Rice 1959).

This popular view presumably is based on the assumption that unemployment causes poverty, and then poverty causes crime. Consider first the studies, a study by Glaser and Rice (1959) which focused on relationship between unemployment and juvenile delinquency found that delinquency is inversely related to unemployment; that is delinquency is high when unemployment is low and vice versa. Glaser and Rice suggested that this might be because in times of unemployment parents are more available to their children. Wright et al. (1997) examined part-time students and found that part-time jobs would increase crime risk of school boys. However, Singell and Fleischer (1967) concluded that delinquency is directly related to unemployment, and that 1 % increase in unemployment results in an approximate 15 % increase in delinquency. Ehrlich (1974) found that unemployment had no effect on the criminality of urban males in the age group 14–24. Danser and Laub (1980) used victimization data rather than official police statistics and concluded that there was no relationship between juvenile delinquency and juvenile unemployment rates, even within specific age, sex, and racial groups. Calvin, in contrast, argues there is a close relationship between delinquency and juvenile unemployment and crime for black youths, and maintains that those who argue against this point are using incorrect data or faulty interpretations.

There have been contradictory findings on the question of the relationship between unemployment and adult crime. Many researchers believe that there are no relationships between unemployment and crime. Nagel found a strong correlation between crime rates and unemployment rates when he ranked each of the fifty states on those two measures. Brenner concluded that a sustained 1 % increase in unemployment results in a 5.7 % increase in murder on the basis of a study of national crime and unemployment statistics from 1940 to 1973. Berk and his colleagues studied programs that provide unemployment benefits to released prisoners, and concluded that unemployment and poverty do cause crime for ex-offenders (Berk et al. 1980). In contrast, a number of other authors have concluded that there is either no relationship between unemployment and crime or that the relationship is insignificant (Jacobs 1981).

These inconsistent and contradictory results continue to be generated by extensive and improved research (Nagel 1981). Freeman reviewed eighteen of these studies and concluded that higher unemployment rates is associated with higher crime rates, but that the relation is weak and generally insignificant. However, Chiricos (1987) reviewed sixty-three studies of crime and unemployment, and concluded that the relationship between unemployment and crime is positive and frequently significant, especially for property crime, and that this effect was especially strong after 1970. Chiricos also argued that the positive relation between crime and unemployment is more likely to be found when smaller units are examined rather than larger units, and that economic conditions in larger units often have little impact on the extent of poverty and deprivation in particular areas (Land et al. 1990).

In addition to these studies on the relationship between crime rate and unemployment rate, there are some studies that examine particular aspects of unemployment. For example, White (1999) examined the impact of job reduction on

crime rates and found that reduction of manufacturing jobs affected the increase of financial crime via poverty but that unemployment had no effect on violent crimes. Shihadeh and Ousey (1998) found that the reduction in low-skill jobs led to increased poverty and resulted in increased violent crimes. Sampson (1987) examined unemployed and divorced families' effects on violence crimes by the Blacks. Shihadeh and Ousey (1998) examined the effect of black social isolation on the rates of black urban violence. Steffensmeier (1980) reviewed and assessed sex differences in patterns of adult crime. Wang and Minor (2002) reviewed relationship between employment access and crime patterns in Cleveland.

## 2.2 Urban Spatial Disorganization and Crime

Research on the relation between urban spatial structure and crime began in 1830s by the ecological Chicago School (Loukaitou-Sideris et al. 2001). After factor analysis in the 1950s and 60s (Lownan 1986) and due to increase of map drawing, computer software and other technical requirements, a pure study of crime from a spatial structure standpoint is still remains a subordinate area of focus for criminologists and sociologists. The geography of crime becomes a branch of geography to study the spatial distribution of crime and the relationship between crime and spacial environment (Herbert 1982).

With criminal quantitative aspects, Harries (2006) empirical analysis of 97,800 crimes in Baltimore was used to re-quantify crime density combined with residential and commercial land. Regarding crime prevention, Herbert and Harries (1986) studied the urban crime prevention of the United States and the United Kingdom, and concluded that local defense measures may be more effective than pure policing measures, such as the neighborhood watch and community surveillance. Someone examined replacement relation between cell behavior and street prostitution in Birmingham and Bradford, and supported that "not-in-my-back-yard" reflected composite anxiety to commercial pornography such as prostitution. They pointed out that mechanically expelling prostitution did not solve any problems (Hubbard 1998).

In regards to the relationships between urban space and crime, most studies before 1990 had been focused on crime patterns, crime types, criminals and victims, and spatial distributions (Pyle 1976; Herbert 1977; Williams 1985; Lowman 1986; Maltz 1976; Blau and Blau 1982). After 1990 however, scholars' study interest turned to the structural mechanism of crime (environment, society and background) and various types of crime in the discussion of cultural connotation (Fyfe 1991; Pawson and Banks 1993; Pain 1997; Shihadeh and Flynn 1996; Coughlin and Venkatesh 2003; Liu et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2007a, b, 2009a, b)

Regarding crime culture, McIlwaine (1999) analyzed the relationship between crime and development as well as various types of criminal culture. A new research trend of criminal geography has now emerged and involves the combination of the geography of crime with gender research, specifically research on the female

fear of violent crimes. Theoretical papers and writings about criminal geography are a relatively rare occurrence in China (Zhang et al. 2009a, b). Main researches include Sun and Wei's (2004, 2006) theoretical induction on geography of crime, as well as Wang's (1988) overview on the western theories about criminal geography. In 1988, Wang (1988) began to introduce criminal geographical studies of a foreign city. In his study, he provided an in-depth analysis of a series of problems such as: the influence of the urban spatial environment to urban crime, comprehensive concepts on urban crime causes, nonpublic spatial blind areas of urban crime, public spatial blind areas of urban crime, marginal spatial blind areas of urban crime, the relationships between city development and urban crimes, and crime prevention effects of urban planning and design. He then put forward urban spatial crime prevention measures as Mao and Dai (2006) used these findings to analysis the relationships between urban spatial environment and crime. However, the domestic research mainly stopped at the summary of foreign theory about the geography of crime, and there was no development or innovation of their own that took place. Due to the lack of empirical data in a specific research study (Mao and Dai 2006), the operability of this theory has been questioned.

There is a striking group of theories about relationships between urban spatial structure disorganization, and crime that some basic concepts were originally created in other disciplines. For example, concepts of "invasion" and "replacing" in early criminal ecology theory, originated from botany, which describe that the process of invasion and succession by new residents in the vegetable kingdom is as same as it in human habitation. This process reflected in urban social space was also a social disorganization process (Park 1952, 1967, 1988). Field theory is one theory of geography of crime that uses the concept of "field" from physics to illustrate the formation principle, spatial structure, system function and classification of crime (Sun and Wei 2006). In addition, Chen et al. (2003) also draws some of the basic concepts from the environmental behavior theory to research environmental influences of crime in urban edge district.

A Study on spatial distribution of urban crime can be specifically divided into three levels macro, middle, and micro level.

Macro level research on spatial distribution of crime uses countries or even continents as the study units. For example, some research compares current crime status between developing and developed countries, and discusses the relationship between the level of development of the country and their crime. This leads researchers to believe that the crime rate in developed countries has an overall trend of increase, while crime rates in developing countries were generally elevated along with the rapid industrialization and development (Sun and Wei 2004).

Middle level research on spatial distribution of crime uses province, state, or city groups as research units. For example, Nelson et al.'s (2001) study on spatiotemporal characteristics of violent crime in British urban center; Sun's (2006) review of Chinese criminal history since the founding of the PRC, and analysis of regional difference of crime was based on 31 provincial level administrative regions, 9 economic regions, and 3 economic zones; Shigeru's (1988) study of relationship between Japanese urban environment and crime, and his analysis of the problems between

citizens awareness; Newman and Kenworthy's (1999) concept of "Defensible Space" on the basis of study on urban crime which believed that material spatial environmental improvement could reduce crime; Liang's (1993) opinion on distribution and interval difference of urban crime phenomenon in province Gansu in China, revealing geographical distribution and regional differences of criminal phenomenon; Doeksen (1997) studied suburban streets in New Zealand and supported that people's attachment and public responsibility to urban public space could enhance social control and thereby reduce crime in the city; Xing (2006) researched on public security prevention and control system of northwest cities in China based on the "defensible space" theory. Research on a micro level uses a single city as the research object and focuses on criminal internal occurrence and distribution in a single city.

Research on a micro level using a single city as research object are common. For example, Cheng and Ma (1997) used the concept of location quotient to study criminal spatiotemporal characteristics and distribution regulations in Beijing city, and concludes that Beijing city and the spatial distributions of crime each in location are different; Mao and Dai's (2006) discussed characteristics of urban crime, temporal and spatial distribution of crime, and the relationship between crime and environment on the basis of study of urban crime mechanism and criminal environment types in Shanghai city; Du (1997) had a different approach and studied criminal geographic spatial distribution of the Canadian city of Edmonton and insisted that there were existing crime in areas within the city; Schweitzer et al. (1999) selected 44 residential areas in Lansing city of Michigan in the United States to study residential environment's effects on crime and fear; Ackerman and Murray (2004) studied crime spatial forming patterns of Lima city, Ohio, the United States of America, and pointed out the "problematic plot" in communities; Luymes and Tamminga (1995) studied the relationship between urban avenue and urban crime, and put forward to planning and design of "Green Boulevard"; Wagner (1997) found that the traffic mode of the city will play a certain role on the city's crime prevention planning; Loukaitou-Sideris et al. (2001) studied the influence of bus station crime and found that environmental factors could affect the number of people who take the bus; Ichniowski and Preston (1989) focused on the relationship between the city structure and organized crime in New York; Guan (2002) viewed on how to prevent the crime in public space from the point of city planning; Jiang (2002) studied the question of urban residential security planning; Du and Tang (1995) studied the mathematical model of the urban location choice and foreign travel problems relevant to urban crime; Weng and Pan (2003) studied the crime prevention theory from city planning; Xu (2003) reviewed nearly 30 years of crime prevention theories from environmental design. Liu (2006) discussed questions about urban crime and corresponding settlements from the perspective of city planning, particularly preventive measures of property crimes in communities. Zhu et al. (2006) discussed the security planning of urban residential space; Chen and Wang (2010) proposed realization of crime prevention by design of sports space in residential area; Liu (2004) proposed the defensible space theory and crime prevention through environmental design; Tang (2005) studied on the city design and crime prevention and control in urban public space.

## 2.3 Social Disorganization and Crime

Social disorganization theory is mainly used to study the relationship between crime and the community in the West. Social disorganization theory is also considered as theoretical basis of this book. So that detailed analysis on research status of social disorganization theory is necessary. Social disorganization theory is one of the early developed western criminal sociological theories. It goes beyond the previous theories which relate crimes to psychological or biological characteristics and individual choice, and states that the adverse economic class as the primary cause of crime. Social disorganization theory as well as strain theory and cultural deviance theory, is mutually independent but overlap, and it belongs to the social structure theory. Social disorganization theory can also be traced to Durkheim's descriptions on social changes and crime. Durkheim considered that the relationship between high-speed social change and crime increase was caused by social control collapse. Scholars in the department of sociology in the University of Chicago viewed Durkheim's opinions as a theoretical basis to study relationships between crime and high-speed change in a community.

### 2.3.1 Early Theoretical Point

Park and Burgess's theory of human ecology: Robert Park proposed a parallel between the distribution of plant life in nature and the organization of human life in societies (Warming 1969). Park viewed the city as a kind of "super-organism" that had "organic unity" derived from the symbiotic interrelations of the people who lived within it. These natural areas had an organic unity of their own and played a part in the life of the city as a whole. The process of "invasion, dominance, and succession" in plant ecology can also be seen in human societies. In cities, one cultural or ethnic group may take over an entire neighborhood from another group, beginning with the shift of only one or two residents. Similarly, business or industries may move into and ultimately take over a previously residential neighborhood (Park 1952). Burgess (1923) further explored Park's theory of human ecology as he pointed out that cities do not merely grow at their edges, rather, they have a tendency to expand radically from their center in patterns of concentric circles moving gradually outward. Burgess described these concentric circles as "zones." A city in social change normally has five zones, each of which is growing and thus is gradually moving outward into the territory occupied by the next zone, in a process of invasion, dominance, and succession (Park 1936).

Shaw and McKay's research in the "delinquency areas" of Chicago: Park's theories were used as the basis for a broadly ranging study of the problem of juvenile delinquency in Chicago by Shaw. Shaw designed a special research program to explore the process in which juvenile delinquency deviated the traditions according to theories of human ecology (Finestone 1976). In *Juvenile Delinquency and*

*Urban Areas*, Shaw and McKay (1942) concluded that delinquency and other social problems are closely related to the process of invasion, dominance, and succession that determines the concentric growth patterns of the city. The “interstitial areas” would be formed when special areas in a city are invaded by new residents, with a variety of social problems that are directly traceable to the rapid shift in population (Shaw and McKay 1969).

### 2.3.2 *Revitalization of the Theory of Social Disorganization*

After a relatively brief period of prominence during the 1950s and 1960s, many criminologists came to view the concept of social disorganization developed by Shaw and McKay as marginal to modern criminological thought, especially after Miller (1962) and others evaluated and argued that Shaw’s Chicago Area Project failed to prevent juvenile delinquency. During this period, theories with a social-psychological orientation stressed socialization within the family, school, and peer groups. These ideas dominated the criminological literature of that time period; however, the social disorganization theory is revitalized by area studies conducted by Bursik, Stark, Sampson, and Kornhauser. These modern social ecologists developed a “purer” form of structural theory that emphasizes the association of community deterioration and economic decline to criminality but places less emphasis on value conflict.

Kornhauser’s *Community Control*: Kornhauser (1978) broke down the theories of Shaw and McKay into two points—“social disorganization” and “subculture.” “Social disorganization’s” stance is that disorganized communities unable to maintain effective social control in which neighborhood and institutions have collapsed; juvenile delinquency will emerge. In other words, the “subculture” view is that juvenile delinquency will be gradually supported by shared values of community residents over time. Shaw and McKay believed that “subculture” was more influential than “social disorganization” on youth crime, and the majority of slum juvenile delinquency is the result of subculture. Kornhauser claimed that social disorganization was the main cause to generate these crimes. He outlined a “community control” mode from the theory of Shaw and McKay. The basic point is that, communities with poverty, ethnic heterogeneity and high residential mobility are difficult to maintain normal social relations and public institutions, and hence will have high rates of crime and juvenile delinquency.

Bursik, Webb, and Stark on *residential succession*: Bursik and Webb also believed that social disorganization is the main factor that affects juvenile delinquency in neighborhoods. They tested the concept of residential succession using data on Chicago neighborhoods directly comparable to that of Shaw and McKay (Sampson 1995). They found that the residential succession argument was supported by data from 1940 to 1950. However, after 1950 all neighborhoods undergoing racial change were characterized by high delinquency rates, regardless of their delinquency rates before the change. Bursik and Webb interpret their finding in terms of community stability. To further explain the phenomenon of residential succession,

Stark (1987) presented a formal theory in thirty integrated propositions. These thirty propositions focused on five structural aspects of urban neighborhoods: density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation. Stark argues that these five structural characteristics increase moral cynicism among community residents and provide more opportunities to commit crime, increase the motivations to commit crimes, and decrease informal surveillance by which crime in a community is held in check. As a consequence, crime-prone citizens are attracted to the neighborhood, while law-abiding people get out if they have the opportunity to do so. It results in high crime rates that tend to persist even when there is a complete turnover in the population.

Sampson on *collective efficacy*: Sampson (1987, 1995) reviewed recent research on the relation between neighborhoods and crime in an attempt to determine how community structures and cultures create different crime rates. He found that poverty itself is not related to crime. Rather, poverty combined with residential mobility seems to be associated with higher levels of violent crime. Neighborhood rates of family disruption are strongly and consistently related to rates of violence. Neighborhoods with high percentages of African Americans have higher crime rates, but race itself tends to be unrelated when family disruption and poverty are taken into account. Finally, neighborhoods with high population density and high concentrations of individuals who do not live within a family situation tend to have higher rates of crime and violence. Sampson explained this pattern of research findings using the framework of social disorganization. He defined social disorganization as the inability of the community to realize its common values. There may be a variety of reasons that some communities cannot realize their common values, but one reason is the lack of what Coleman calls “social capital”—i.e., networks of relationships among people that facilitate common actions and make possible the achievement of common goals (Coleman 1988). In general, when there are many social relationships among community residents, there is less crime; low social capital would reduce informal social control and this leads to the growth of crime and community disorganization.

Sampson and Groves (1989) found that the existence of juvenile street groups was caused by the community’s lack of informal social control to the youth. Sampson, then introduced the term of “collective efficacy” and defined it as the community’s ability to maintain order in public places. Sampson believed that only the linkage of community cohesion, mutual trust, and common aspiration can reach collective efficacy. After empirical analysis, Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) inferred that social structural defects and weakened collective efficacy were the positive factor that promotes crime rates. Researchers supporting social disorganization theory prefer to link social disorganization to many other concepts and categories, such as race (Stults and Baumer 2007), social isolation (Shihadeh and Ousey 1998), social capital (Messner et al. 2004), ethnic heterogeneity (Hansmann and Quigley 1982), social injustice (Kelly 2000), and social structure (Liska and Chamlin 1984; Williams and Timberlake 1984). These detailed expositions enrich and strengthen the relative research on the relationship between social disorganization and crime, as well as widen the applied extension of the social disorganization theory as a whole.

### ***2.3.3 Critical Summary on Research Status of the Social Disorganization Theory***

- (I) There still has been no unified definition on the basic concepts of the social disorganization theory. Many research results are conflicting and inconclusive. For example, there are different understandings about the concept of “social disorganization.” Durkheim (1964) believed that the uncertainty and expectations of the future would cause social disorganization; Shaw and McKay thought that quantitative impoverished population, ethnic difference and frequent migration are three major structural causes of community disorganization; Sampson defined social disorganization as a community that has no ability to realize its common values. In relationships between economic status and crime, empirical research on relationships between unemployment and crime caused different or even opposite conclusions. On the study of the relationship between modernization and crime, there has still no uniformed conclusion.
- (II) There has also been no certain conclusion about causality of crime and social disorganization. It is generally believed that social disorganization leads to the increasing crime rate. However, I think that there are bilateral relations between social disorganization and crime, namely that social disorganization causes an increase in the crime rate, while the increasing rate of crime would exacerbate social disorganization.
- (III) Factors constituting the main body of current research include: informal social control, social connection, social capital, and collective efficacy. Current research emphasizes the relationship between structural factors and community crime, while ignoring the effect of culture on community crime. Previous research reveals that the not only structural factors of the social disorganization theory, but also cultural factors influence on crime should be paid attention to. For example, Shaw and McKay pointed out long ago that subculture was an important component of the community social structure. Previous research concluded that these two factors should act together to community crime, but did not put address the concept of “cultural disorganization.” Previous research was also not aware that a disorganized community would be not only be disorganized in the social structure, but also in its culture.
- (IV) Research that was focused on the influence of “informal social control” showed less solicitude for the effect of formal social control on community crime.
- (V) Most of the research was limited to the influence of various factors within the community on crime and the correlation between various inner factors, while the research ignored the influence of the external environment of the community on community crime.
- (VI) As far as research method is concerned, the most research data is collected through questionnaire surveys. And once completed, the quantitative data analysis is compiled using statistical software, while few researchers made qualitative researches through in-depth interviews.

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