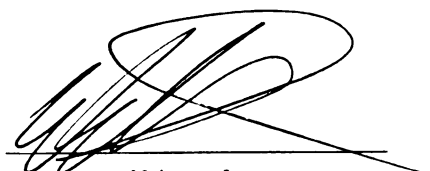


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**THE IMPACT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD MICROSYSTEM ON ADOLESCENT
OUTCOMES: A BLOCK-BY-BLOCK ANALYSIS OF SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

By

Daniel M. Cantillon, Jr.

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD MICROSYSTEM ON ADOLESCENT OUTCOMES: A BLOCK-BY-BLOCK ANALYSIS OF SENSE OF COMMUNITY

By

Daniel M. Cantillon, Jr.

This study utilized an updated systemic model of social disorganization to assess community effects on adolescent outcomes. The research on neighborhood or community effects has substantially increased in recent years yet it is argued that current conceptualizations of the important social characteristics of communities is still lacking. This study utilized Sense of Community (SOC) as a possible mediating variable of social disorganization theory in an attempt to introduce a comprehensive and systemic measure to the field. The results of this study indicate that SOC was able to measure and discriminate among differential levels of social organization within a community and that these levels are related to both positive and negative youth outcomes. The results suggest two possible modifications for future investigations of the neighborhood microsystem. One, there are varying conceptualizations of neighborhood and research needs to begin the assessment of neighborhood effects from the block or face-block level. It was found that there are indeed important differences between face-blocks in the same census tract and these differences must be accounted for in any truly contextual model of neighborhood effects. Two, the sense of community construct is recommended for inclusion in future neighborhood based studies. It is a more systemic and applicable measure than current conceptualizations and may provide more insights into how neighborhoods affect youth outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

"... I urge you to consider this: As you demand tougher penalties for those who choose violence, let us also remember how we came to this sad point ... We have seen a stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family, and work. This has created a vast vacuum which has been filled by violence and drugs and gangs. So I ask you to remember that even as we say no to crime, we must give people, especially our young people something to say yes to."

President Clinton, State of the Union Address, January 24, 1994

America's juvenile delinquency problem has garnered significant public attention in recent decades and is one of the defining political issues of the day. A primary reason for the public's current concern with delinquency was due to the dramatic increase which occurred in the late eighties and early nineties. For instance, from 1985 to 1994, arrests of juveniles for rape increased by 25%, robbery by 53%, aggravated assault by 34% and, even more alarming, arrests for murder increased by 144% (Butts, 1996). While these statistics are quite disconcerting, more recent data displays an overall decline in juvenile crime over the past several years. Juvenile arrests for violent crimes dropped 19% from 1994 to 1998 and juvenile arrests for violence in 1998 were the lowest they had been in a decade (OJJDP, 1998). Despite the current statistics, however, there is a perception among the general public and policymakers that juvenile crime is forever on the rise and

that each generation of youth are simply more violent than the previous generation (Eddy & Gribskov, 1998).

This misperception has translated into changes in juvenile justice policy. Over the last decade, the majority of states have reduced the age at which juveniles can be tried as adults and have also provided stiffer penalties for convicted juveniles (Yee, 1998). For instance, in 1996, Michigan passed legislation that reduced the age limit for transfer to adult court from 15 to 14 and also doubled the number of offenses for this possible transfer from nine to 18 (Clark, 1996). Another substantial change enacted by this legislation was that prosecutors could now try juveniles in the traditional juvenile court as adults for any specified juvenile offense without age restrictions.

Michigan's implementation of "get tough" juvenile offender laws recently brought the state national attention when Nathaniel Abraham was charged as an adult for murder in the first degree (in juvenile court) for a crime he committed when he was only 11 years-old. Fortunately for Nathaniel and youth advocates, Judge Eugene Moore refused to sentence him as an adult or impose the politically palatable "blended sentence." Instead, Judge Moore sentenced Nathaniel to a maximum eight year sentence at one of the state's training schools, derided the 1996 law, and summed up the case by stating, "He is a boy who has been neglected by his home, our community, and our juvenile justice system. He represents our collective failings" (Knott & Brand-Williams, 2000).

As the above quote and President Clinton's 1994 State of the Union address indicate, much of the dialogue regarding the etiology of juvenile crime has focused on the breakdown of the neighborhood as a nurturing and caring environment. The intent of the

current study is to focus on how neighborhoods influence the children who are reared within them. While there may be agreement that it takes a village to raise a child, one vital and unanswered question remains: exactly what type of village? Which neighborhood characteristics lead to positive youth outcomes and which characteristics lead to deleterious youth outcomes?

The majority of studies that have addressed the impact of neighborhood characteristics on juvenile crime have limited their analyses to the socioeconomic status (SES) of the neighborhood (Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1996; Kornhauser, 1978). While low SES has long been associated with higher incidence of crime, many past and contemporary analyses have not explicated the true nature of this relationship. What is it about growing up in poor environments that leads to increased contact with the juvenile justice system? Some researchers disagree with these prior statements altogether and suggest that the increased contact with the police and justice systems are simply reflections of bias rather than differential offending rates (Sampson, 1986). Also, there are examples of low-income neighborhoods across the United States that have not had delinquency problems or high rates of other negative youth outcomes (Maccoby, Johnson, & Church, 1968). How have these areas avoided the pervasive negative impact of poverty on child developmental outcomes like delinquency? So, while there is agreement that neighborhoods matter, the question that remains unanswered is - *how*?

This question of how neighborhoods matter has recently been re-addressed from a social-ecological framework. This framework includes an emphasis on how SES affects the structural or normative characteristics of a neighborhood, its social dimensions, and ultimately delinquency rates (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Bursik, 1988;

Sampson, 1993; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986). The current study continues this exploration of the nature of the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and delinquency. The current study offers both theoretical and methodological improvements over previous work. Specifically, neighborhood is conceptualized in a much smaller, objective, and relevant unit for urban residents – the face-block. Face-blocks are houses on a street that face each other and are bounded by cross-streets. Other research has indicated the usefulness of the face-block in understanding residents' perception of informal social control, crime, and fear of crime (Perkins & Taylor, 1996; Schweitzer, Kim, & Mackin, 1999; Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1984). At the methodological level, it is argued that sense of community (SOC) provides a more comprehensive and systemic measure of the intervening variables in social disorganization theory. The vast majority of recent neighborhood studies have lacked this relevant proximal unit of the face-block and have not fully measured or captured the intervening variables proposed by social disorganization theory.

Before discussing in detail the need for the current study, a review of social theories of delinquency is warranted. There will be an emphasis on social disorganization theory in this review since it is the grounding theory for the study. Next, an historical overview of the sense of community construct will be presented. Third, an argument will be made regarding the re-emergence of social disorganization theory in delinquency research and the need for improved methodology in the field. Fourth, recent literature on neighborhood-based, social disorganization studies will be examined. Finally, the author will describe how the current study will improve the field's

understanding of the impact of the neighborhood microsystem on multiple youth outcomes, with a particular emphasis on juvenile delinquency.

Social Theories of Delinquency

Subcultural or Cultural Deviance Theories

Walter Miller (1958) is one of the prominent theoreticians of delinquency in urban communities which were often labeled as poor, lower-class, or poverty-stricken. Miller was largely concerned with gang or group delinquency that occurred in poor communities across the United States during the 1950s. One of the main assumptions of Miller's subcultural theories was that juveniles were perceived as goal-oriented and their delinquent behavior was a direct attempt to achieve status by following lower-class guidelines for appropriate behavior. Miller contended that lower-class values were different from the middle-class and those values were the main reason for the increased delinquency rates that occurred in these areas. In a related vein, Miller also emphasized that the lack of intact families in these areas was another major cause of the increased delinquency rates.

There was a strong sense of victim-blaming throughout Miller's analysis of poor communities and their 'deviant' value system:

In the case of gang delinquency, the cultural system which exerts the most direct influence on behavior is that of the lower-class community itself – a long-established, distinctively patterned tradition with an integrity of its own – a rather so-called “delinquent subculture” which has arisen through conflict with middle-class culture and is oriented to the deliberate violation of middle-class norms (p. 5).

In his analysis, Miller was not concerned with conditions of oppression and factors like prejudice, racism, and inadequate housing and public schools which isolated individuals in these circumstances and created this “delinquent subculture.” He simply attributed the effects of poverty and other negative social conditions to those who happened to be born in these chaotic communities. Furthermore, while there may have existed a delinquent or criminal subculture, it was certainly true and continues to be true that the majority of individuals in poor communities have the same exact values as those in the middle and upper-classes.

Despite this and other criticisms, the importance of Miller’s work resided in his attempt to understand a particular type of delinquency - gang delinquency in poor urban areas. It was primarily due to his efforts, and other pioneers concerned with gang and lower-class delinquency (e.g., strain theorists), that social scientists paid more attention to the influence of poor neighborhoods, delinquent peers, and the existence of illegal economies.

Strain Theories

Strain theories also attempted to explain delinquency that occurred in lower SES neighborhoods. In contrast to subcultural theory, strain theory asserted that the motivation toward delinquency was not to attain status or reputation by following a different (i.e., lower-class) value orientation. Rather, delinquent behaviors were the product of the desire to attain ‘normal’ societal aspirations, while lacking the same opportunity as those who resided in the middle and upper-social classes (Merton, 1938; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). This disadvantage brought about frustration at the gap between socially desired goals and socially approved means of achieving them, and illegitimate or

delinquent paths were more likely to be considered and taken, especially in a group context (Shoemaker, 1990). So, although there was a similarity between the two theories in that both viewed individuals as rational and goal-oriented, their explanations as to the path of delinquency differed substantially.

Social Learning Theories

Social learning was an all-encompassing theory of behavior which did not seek to solely explain deviance or delinquency. This theory postulated that all human behaviors are predicated on the anticipated reinforcements for behavior. The decision to perform a behavior was the result of a rational assessment of the rewards and possible negative sanctions for that behavior compared to the rewards and possible negative sanctions for alternative behaviors (Akers, 1990; Akers, 1977; Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985). A particular strength of this theory was that it attempted to explain behavior across all SES groups. Also, this theory did not assume any constant strain or motivation for delinquent behavior. Rather, social learning theory postulated that delinquency was the result of direct socialization with a deviant peer group and conformity was the result of direct socialization with a conventional peer group. In this manner, social learning theory was similar to social control theory, as will be presented, in that both viewed delinquency as a result of variations in a youth's socialization experience. Meanwhile, this theory matched adequately with subcultural theories if one assumed there was a greater presence of deviant peer groups in disadvantaged communities.

Social Control Theories

This perspective assumed that there must be some form of internal or external constraint if criminal or delinquent behavior was to be held to a minimum. In other

words, delinquent or criminal behavior was universal and society needed appropriate control mechanisms to keep it to a minimum. It was hypothesized that there were both internal or personal and external or social control mechanisms. Personal social control theories focused on individual psychological constructs like self-esteem and internalized norms. Social control theories focused on individuals' attachments to social institutions like the family, school, church, and neighborhood (Shoemaker, 1990). As Hirschi (1969) stated, social control extends beyond mere attachment to also address one's commitment, involvement and belief in the social system. In sum, social control theory postulated that delinquency was the result of a weakened attachment and commitment to society and its key social institutions. There has been extensive research on social control theory; however, the primary focus has been on proximal units like the individual and family without incorporating more macrolevel variables. (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993).

Recently however, there has been considerable research on the effects of the neighborhood and school microsystems on delinquency participation and other youth developmental outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996). In this aspect, social control and social disorganization theories, as will be discussed, drew the similar conclusion that a reduction in or lack of a bond to our basic societal institutions resulted in increased delinquency (Agnew, 1993; Elliot et al., 1985; Shoemaker, 1990). The current study follows this line of inquiry by investigating how the sense of community in neighborhoods is related to "control" over youth that reside there. While social control theory and social disorganization postulated the influence of our basic societal institutions (family, school, church, neighborhood, etc.)

on adolescent development, their relative importance has not been adequately explored or empirically demonstrated. Therefore, this study will add to our knowledge of one of the important social control mechanisms, the neighborhood or local community, and allow one to draw inferences on its relative importance.

Social Disorganization Theories

Old Chicago-school. One of the earliest and most influential social theories of delinquency was developed at what is now referred to as the old Chicago-school. The sociology department at University of Chicago was the first institution in the United States which assessed the impact of America's urbanization in the early to mid-1900s. In The City, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie (1967) presented an ecological theory, borrowed from biology's attempt to understand how plant life adapted to changing environments, and theorized how humans adapted to their rapidly changing environment. Specifically, the authors were interested in how people adapted to the rise of urban centers. In this case, the entire city of Chicago had become a research laboratory. The old Chicago-school was concerned with measuring and assessing the impact of the expansion of our cities and the concomitant changes in social life for its residents. In the second chapter of The City, Burgess proposed his influential concentric zone theory in which each he argued that each successive concentric circle represented the extension or growth of a city from the original circle, which represented the central business district, the Loop in this case. From these zones, one could predict the type of physical structures, businesses, and demographic characteristics of the individuals who had chosen to locate there. Basically, the poorest and least attractive housing and neighborhoods were found directly outside the central business district, the Loop, followed by more and more attractive

neighborhoods characterized by higher standards of living and considerably less social problems (e.g., crime, prostitution, drugs). As each social group gained more financial resources and social status there was an effort to move outward to a better community. This resulted in expansion of the city, the tendency for each inner zone to extend its area by invading the adjacent outer zone. Thus, cities were in a constant state of change and expansion.

As previously mentioned, the old Chicago-school was mainly concerned with how this growth process affected the social organization of these communities which were in a constant state of transformation. So, as one zone was invaded by another, how were all of the individuals redistributed and what was the overall effect on the involved communities? It was postulated that as communities expanded and incorporated outer zones these areas would go through massive changes due to population increase and turnover (invasion) and the community would be in a state of disorganization until, after some time, it stabilized into a new outer zone (succession). Therefore, the present level of invasion and succession in a particular neighborhood could predict the social organization of communities. According to this ecological theory, social problems could be found in their most acute forms in communities undergoing these rapid population changes - in disorganized communities.

Social disorganization. Shaw and McKay (1942) extended this ecological approach in the specific area of delinquency. These two sociologists are largely credited for popularizing a social ecological theory of delinquency, social disorganization theory, which explained how poor urban environments affected adolescent development and delinquency. However, the general premise that environmental factors, especially after

the industrial revolution, had an impact on delinquency and other social problems had a long history dating back to nineteenth-century European scholars (Shoemaker, 1990; Krisberg & Austin, 1978).

Shaw and McKay argued that there was not a direct relationship between the economic composition of a community and delinquency rates. Rather, there were additional variables that explained the relationship between low economic status and high rates of delinquency. These authors, in the ecological tradition of previous University of Chicago scholars, proposed that urban neighborhoods also had higher rates of population turnover (invasion and succession) and a greater mix of racial and ethnic groups. The crux of their argument was that it is all of these variables -- low SES, population turnover, and cultural heterogeneity -- which led to poorly organized communities which in turn led to higher delinquency and crime rates. Thus, social disorganization was defined as the inability of local communities to realize the common values of their residents or solve commonly experienced problems (Kornhauser, 1978).

Shaw and McKay argued that there was great difficulty in maintaining a strong institutional base when a community underwent rapid population turnover. Most members of the community wanted to live elsewhere and were intent on moving as soon as it was economically feasible. Therefore, little effort was exerted in maintaining or improving the basic social institutions of the community – schools, churches, social service organizations, etc. This resulted in the breakdown of the formal institutions that helped communities come together and solve their problems (Shoemaker, 1990). Population turnover and cultural heterogeneity also impeded the natural process of communication and friendships that develop over time within the community. This

communication process was painstakingly slow and unfeasible in a community with a constant influx of new residents, especially those who may speak little to no English. Thus, high rates of population turnover and large amounts of heterogeneity, coupled with low SES and the corresponding lack of informal and institutional resources, reduced the development of strong local ties, norms, and informal social control which served to regulate inappropriate public behavior like delinquency (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Greenberg & Rohe, 1986; Sampson, 1997).

To summarize, this theory began with certain structural or compositional characteristics of urban communities and explained how certain combinations of these components led to a decrease in the formal and informal mechanisms of a community that controlled individual behavior. Social disorganization posited that it is the level of social organization, or, more accurately, high levels of social disorganization that mediated the relationship between a neighborhood's SES and crime and delinquency rates.

Given the negative and value-laden term of social disorganization, this author preferred to gauge communities in terms of the relative levels of social organization. Therefore, the term neighborhood disadvantage is utilized to refer to what the old Chicago-school labeled social disorganization. In accordance with Shaw and McKay, the major postulate of the current study is that communities characterized by neighborhood disadvantage (low levels of social organization) will have lower rates of sense of community and greater incidence of delinquency and other negative youth outcomes.

The previous description of social theories of delinquency was not all-inclusive and the goal of this study is not to test one social theory against another. Rather, the

discussion was intended to provide some theoretical background on the development of social theories of delinquency and show that there was a great deal of overlap even though their basic assumptions often dramatically differed. For instance, social disorganization contained elements of social control, strain, and subcultural theories (Kornhauser, 1978). However, for theoretical grounding, social disorganization's basis on understanding rapid ecological changes in urban areas is best approached from a control-theoretic perspective (Bursik, 1988; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993).

The current study follows the guidelines and principles of social disorganization theory and is also consistent with social control theory's emphasis on external institutional and informal social controls. The belief that SOC is related to delinquency rates and other youth outcomes also corresponds to social learning theory and subcultural theory in that youths who are socialized in stable communities are more likely to bond with conventional peer groups and follow the formal and informal guidelines of the particular community. Sense of community was not conceptualized as a mediating construct specifically for social disorganization theory, yet this variable epitomizes what Shaw and McKay meant by organized communities, those that were able to meet the diverse needs of its members. Since this construct is borrowed from community psychology and has not been previously proposed as a mediating construct for social disorganization theory, the next section discusses the history of the construct and reasons for its inclusion in the neighborhood disadvantage framework.

History of the Sense of Community (SOC) Construct

SOC is defined as “a *feeling* [italics added] that members have of belonging and being important to each other, and a *shared faith* that members' needs will be met by

their commitment to be together” (McMillan, 1976). According to McMillan, there are four essential elements to this construct: membership, influence, sharing of values with an integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. The most commonly used scale for SOC has been the shortened version of the sense of community index that was originally proposed and empirically evaluated in Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman’s (1986) landmark study. However, there have been multiple scales utilized over the years (Buckner, 1988; Davidson & Cotter, 1986; Doolittle & MacDonald, 1978; Glynn, 1981). The scale used in the present study was created by the Sense of Community in Lansing Neighborhood Project team in 1995 and contains many items from these aforementioned scales.

Since this variable’s initial conception, it has been heralded by community psychologists as one of the most important theoretical propositions since the birth of community psychology. For instance, in 1974 Sarason referred to SOC as one of the overarching values of community psychology. In a recent special edition in the *Journal of Community Psychology*, Lorion and Newbrough (1996) stated,

For both of us, that concept (PSOC), above all others, represents the essence of the field’s unique perspective on understanding the human condition. We also viewed this concept as most reflective of the field’s initial *raison d’etre*, i.e., to reconnect the social sciences generally and psychology specifically to life as experienced by people under everyday circumstances. To us, the PSOC is as central to the view of community psychology as the psychology of everyday life (p. 311).

To date there have been a large number of publications and four special issues of the Journal of Community Psychology devoted entirely to the topic psychological sense of community (Chavis & Pretty, 1999). Despite the vast amount of attention paid by researchers and journals to the topic, a recent literature review in the 1996 special issue indicated that there were not many studies that actually measured the variable. Further, those that did presented contradictory findings as to what correlated with the construct and even its basic factor structure (Hill, 1996). One of the reasons for the inability of the field to advance this theory was simply because it is extremely difficult to assess community level constructs or contextual effects (Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1996; Sampson, 1991; Shinn, 1990), and, as a field, we were still confined to methodological individualism at the same time that we eschewed it: “Where is the community in community psychology?” (Heller, 1989, p.1).

However, this is not to say that there was no valid or productive research regarding sense of community, especially in the years since the 1996 special issue. An individual’s level of SOC has been found to be a prime determinant in providing both instrumental and emotional support to one’s neighbors (Unger & Wandersman, 1982) and may act as a catalyst for both community participation (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990) and political participation (Davidson & Cotter, 1989). The SOC construct has also been studied in a number of diverse settings such as the workplace (Burroughs & Eby, 1998), high schools (Royal & Rossi, 1996), community organizations (Hughey, Speer, & Peterson, 1999), and housing for the elderly (Zaff & Devlin, 1999). In the residential-based neighborhood setting, SOC has been documented as a quantifiable neighborhood level construct which can be targeted in designing intervention and rehabilitation

programs for disadvantaged urban neighborhoods (Buckner, 1988; Chavis et al., 1986; Glynn, 1981; Kingston, Mitchell, Florin, & Stevenson, 1999).

Thus, it would seem more than plausible that sense of community also taps into the informal social processes that are necessary for a community to self-regulate and inhibit behaviors harmful to the collective, such as crime and delinquency. Therefore, it meets all the defining criteria of social organization and should be considered as a possible key mediating construct. However, before one can assert SOC as a possible mediating measure for SD theory, a review of the burgeoning literature on neighborhood effects is necessary. First, is the general model of social disorganization still valid? Is it receiving empirical support in current studies? If so, how is the level of social organization/disorganization being measured? The following review will trace the development of social disorganization theory over the past two decades and answer these pertinent questions.

The Re-Emergence of Social Disorganization

Social disorganization theory was prominent in the middle part of this century and has once again re-emerged as the prominent social theory in explaining the role neighborhood characteristics play in explaining variations in crime and delinquency rates (Bursik, 1988; Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). In fact, there have been a number of recent neighborhood studies that utilized components of this theory to understand the importance of contextual effects on delinquency (Elliot et al., 1996; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986; Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger, & Whitbeck, 1996).

One of the main criticisms of the social disorganization model, which was recently addressed, was the lack of empirical support for the proposed intervening relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime. This was due, in large part, to the aforementioned problems in measuring community level constructs and on the over-reliance on census data. While census data provides a large amount of demographic information, it does not provide measures for the proposed mediating variables of neighborhood composition. SES, population turnover and heterogeneity are easily quantified through census data, but measurements of the social organization of a neighborhood required costly and time-consuming survey and interview collection (Bursik, 1988; Heitgard & Bursik, 1987; Sampson, 1993).

Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz's (1986) study marked the return of social disorganization theory by answering the long-standing criticism that, although theoretically popular, it had never been empirically demonstrated in a large-scale study. The main finding of this study was that there were two neighborhood level constructs, proposed by social theories of delinquency, which mediated the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime. The authors operationalized this disorganization or neighborhood disadvantage by measuring the individual level of organizational participation in neighborhood activities and programs. The second neighborhood level construct, often labeled subcultural theory, was operationalized by measuring the extent of disorder-criminal subculture. Specifically, the authors found that a community's level of organizational participation and extent of disorder-criminal subculture accounted for 52% of self-reported and 80% of officially recorded delinquency. In other words, the community effects on delinquency were largely mediated by socialization experiences.

In addition, Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz found that the level of organizational participation was better at predicting self-reported delinquency while extent of disorder-criminal subculture was better at predicting officially recorded delinquency. This finding reflected the prevalent criticism that officially recorded delinquency is biased in that police often concentrate their efforts at apprehending individuals in high poverty areas (Sampson, 1986). This often cited study was the first to empirically document support for the intervening variables of social disorganization theory.

Sampson and Groves (1989) provided an even more direct test on the mediating variables in social disorganization theory. Due to the inherent problems of testing macrosocial intervening variables via census data, these authors utilized national survey data from Great Britain and Wales. The unique design of the British Crime Survey allowed the authors to create measures of both social disorganization and crime and victimization rates for more than 200 local communities. They hypothesized that neighborhoods characterized by low SES, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility, and family disruption led to community social disorganization which, in turn, led to increased crime and delinquency. They measured a community's level of social organization in terms of local friendship networks, control of street-corner teenage peer groups, and prevalence of organizational participation.

The results supported the hypothesis that variations in the social organization of local communities mediated much of the effects of demographic community characteristics (SES, residential mobility, etc.) on crime and victimization. Specifically, the level of unsupervised teenage peer groups, a proxy measure for informal control, had the largest mediating effect on rates of personal violence and victimization. One

interesting finding was that organizational participation proved to be the weakest mediating variable in contrast to the findings from Simcha-Fagan and Schwartz's (1986) landmark study.

While providing significant support for social disorganization theory, there were some limitations to this study. First, each of the proposed mediating variables was assessed by single items and, thus, suffered from a lack of reliability. Further, the systemic concept of social organization is difficult to measure and one of the many reasons for the lack of empirical support of social disorganization theory. It is not likely that social organization can be accurately measured through the use of single survey items. Therefore, given this limitation, significant findings from a culture outside the United States palpably displayed both the validity and generalizability of the theory. In fact, the authors were well aware of this limitation and in their conclusion suggested that better measures of social disorganization needed to be created to thoroughly and accurately measure this systemic concept:

And most important, we believe that the ability to measure dimensions of social disorganization at the community level represents an essential first step in directly testing macrosocial control theory... We therefore hope that future research will improve on the present effort by directing attention toward more precise measures of the salient dimensions of community social disorganization (Sampson & Groves, 1989, p.800).

A recent multi-site study answered this plea for a more comprehensive and systemic measure of the social organization in a community (Elliott et al., 1996). The study's neighborhood contextual model not only allowed for further empirical assessment

of social organization as a mediating variable, but also assessed the impact of this neighborhood level construct on individual behavior and development. Specifically, the authors hypothesized that the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime is mediated by neighborhood organization and culture as proposed by social disorganization theory. Neighborhood organization and culture was measured in terms of the level of social integration, informal control, and prevalence of informal networks. The dependent variable consisted of three individual-level outcomes – prosocial competence, conventional friends, and problem behavior [delinquency].

Once again, results indicated support for an intervening relationship and the authors utilized hierarchical linear modeling to display which component of neighborhood organization was the strongest predictor of the three outcomes at the individual level. Informal control was the only component of neighborhood organization that was a significant predictor for all three developmental outcomes at both sites (Chicago and Denver). Social integration significantly predicted the outcome of prosocial competence, but only in Chicago. In a related manner, the mediating construct of informal networks significantly predicted the level of conventional friends only in the Denver sample.

This study continued the trend of more sophisticated neighborhood level analyses on the mediating variables proposed by social disorganization theory. This study was unique in many ways. Unlike other criminological endeavors, the goal of present-day neighborhood studies is to identify protective or resiliency factors, as well as impeding or risk factors that can be targeted through prevention and intervention programs.

Therefore, positive behaviors like conventional friends and prosocial competence were

measured in addition to problem behavior [delinquency]. Further, this was the first study that utilized a mediating model of social disorganization which assessed the influence of neighborhood level variables on individual development and behavior through hierarchical linear modeling (HLM).

This study also addressed, albeit incompletely, the criticism that the majority of social disorganization or ND studies viewed, or at least analyzed, neighborhoods as if they were static structures (Bursik, 1988; Sampson, 1993). This valid critique has disturbed many in the field because social disorganization theory attempted to explain the rapidly changing demographic characteristics typical of urban areas that resulted in increased crime and delinquency rates. Obviously, there are serious financial and time constraints which preclude longitudinal analyses which could assess such an impact of change in a neighborhood. Therefore, every attempt should be made to at least include multi-site studies so comparisons can be made across communities. For example, the results of this study indicated that there were indeed differences between Chicago and Denver and that these differences need to be taken into consideration before implementing any type of intervention program.

The largest and most recent neighborhood study included over 8,000 participants representing 343 neighborhoods in Chicago (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). This study's main focus was to explicate the variables responsible for mediating the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and violence rates. Once again, the mediating variable proposed was derived from social disorganization theory: "Our basic premise is that social and organizational characteristics of neighborhoods explain variations in crime rates that are not solely attributable to the aggregated demographic

characteristics of individuals” (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997, p. 918). These authors measured social organization via informal control (5 items) and social cohesiveness and trust (5 items). Since these two subscales were significantly correlated, they were combined to create a summary construct the authors labeled collective efficacy (CE). There were three different measures of violence in this study. Perceived violence and personal victimization were measured through survey items, and, for a comparison statistic, officially recorded measures of homicide were also included. The authors’ specific model was that the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and violence rates would be mediated by collective efficacy. Neighborhood disadvantage was measured by concentrated disadvantage (low SES), immigrant concentration (population heterogeneity), and residential stability (population turnover).

These demographic or compositional characteristics significantly explained over 70% of the variability in perceived violence rates across neighborhoods. However, CE proved to mediate this relationship as both population turnover and population heterogeneity reduced to nonsignificant levels and low SES’s effects were substantially reduced. CE also demonstrated discriminant validity by proving to be a stronger predictor than other social processes such as friendship and kinship ties, neighborhood services, and organizational participation.

Reformulated Systemic Theories of Social Disorganization

In summary, updated social disorganization models have received recent empirical support and findings from the two most recent studies indicated that one of the more important components of this mediating construct was the level of informal control in the neighborhood (see Figure 1). It would seem logical that the informal social control

variable would tap into the ability of the community to realize its common values and self regulate behavior that would be harmful to the collective. In fact, there has been extensive discussion on the important role of informal social control in controlling crime and delinquency (Greenberg & Rohe, 1985; Sampson, 1997). Adding momentum to these empirical findings, Bursik & Grasmick (1993) published a seminal book that utilized social disorganization theory to focus on the importance of informal relations and social control across multiple neighborhood levels.

This book presented an updated social disorganization model which also addressed one of the strongest critiques of social disorganization or neighborhood disadvantage in that it often neglected important external factors that influenced neighborhood social organization. Before discussing the specifics of the book, it is necessary to first illustrate the strength of extralocal community factors and how they can disrupt the natural process of community ties and cohesion. The following example from Chicago will display both the strength and importance of accounting for all factors outside the community which have an impact on a neighborhood's level of social organization. After the example from Chicago, a discussion of this updated social disorganization model will be presented with a focus on how it utilizes multiple levels of neighborhood units to account for extralocal community forces and to explain the process of informal social control in the local community.

Extralocal Factors

Logan and Molotch (1987) are perhaps the most well known of old Chicago-school critics who felt ecologists grossly underestimated the undemocratic and unnatural processes that occur in the distribution of people and resources within neighborhoods

across cities in the United States. As they discuss in Urban Fortunes, there are many political, economic, and social forces which influenced the growth or demise of certain areas in a metropolis. For instance, on the South Side of Chicago the African-American population was isolated by discriminatory housing policies in a small area known as the Black Belt until 1948 when the Supreme Court struck down race-restrictive covenants in housing policies. As African-Americans slowly gained greater mobility and choice in housing, there was tremendous opposition by the surrounding ethnic white neighborhoods which resulted in numerous racial conflicts, real estate speculation, and white flight to the suburbs (Bursik and Webb, 1982; Hirsch, 1998). Obviously, Burgess's concentric zone theory and invasion/succession principles captured in social disorganization theory were unable to explain the influence of these 'unnatural' forces in neighborhood change. The result was that Shaw and McKay's (1962) important theoretical finding that delinquency rates remained relatively stable despite continuous changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the community was no longer valid.

However, as Bursik and Webb demonstrated (1982) in a re-analysis of the original data, social disorganization still maintained validity if one looked at the nature and pace of change in the racial and ethnic composition which now dramatically differed from the past. Community change in racial composition in this era was characterized as foothold change, turnover change, or entrenchment change. Foothold change represented an increase of families of color in a neighborhood by at least 10% over ten years, but where they remained in the minority, while turnover change represented an increase of at least 10% but where families of color moved from minority to majority status. Entrenchment change occurred when families of color increased their composition by

10% and were in the majority in the community in all ten years. The main finding of this re-analysis was that delinquency rates significantly increased for foothold and turnover change but remained stable for entrenchment change: “The most established nonwhite, changing communities [entrenchment areas] had delinquency rates not much different than would have been expected from their previous patterns” (Bursik and Webb, 1982, p.39).

So, the variation in delinquency patterns reflected the *nature* of racial change rather than the specific groups involved. The incredible patterns of population turnover during this era excluded the development of an institutional and social network base that was responsible for keeping delinquency rates stable among Chicago neighborhoods up to 1950. Therefore, social disorganization theory still retained validity if one analyzed the external social forces (e.g., discriminatory housing practices, racism, white flight) that dramatically altered the gradual process of invasion/succession for African Americans since 1950. Updated social disorganization models need to be able to explain these important political, social, and economic forces both inside and outside the neighborhood that affect neighborhood composition and development as evidenced by the example of Chicago. Some of these recent external forces which have altered the growth or decline of our cities include: loss of traditional employment opportunities in industrial cities and increasing concentration of the extremely poor in the central city (Jargowsky, 1997; Jargowsky & Bane, 1991; Wilson, 1996); erosion of the local tax base which has decreased the ability of cities to provide essential public services (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993); and the impact of pro-business incentives and discriminatory housing policies (Hirsch, 1998; Molotch, 1987).

An Updated and Systemic Model

Bursik and Grasmick's systemic theory of social disorganization utilizes Hunter's (1985) three-level approach of community control to connect the neighborhood resident to these external forces. This approach begins with the most immediate geographical area of the resident and extends outward to include an increasingly larger and larger area. The first level of control is termed the private level of community control. It represents the intimate yet informal relations that develop over time directly surrounding the resident's dwelling. These are the type of relationships that develop among neighbors who provide instrumental support, such as the lending of tools or direct assistance, and the emotional attachment and support that comes from day-to-day contact. In this conceptualization of the neighborhood, shared norms exist about the appropriateness of public behavior and, if broken, can result in direct criticism, ridicule or ostracism from your fellow neighbors (Black, 1989).

The second level of community control is called the parochial level and extends from the geographical area immediately surrounding the resident's dwelling outward to include other nearby areas and the institutions and resources located there such as schools, social service agencies, churches, parks, and libraries. The parochial level of community captures the social attachments among close neighbors as well as the relationships that are not so well established or relationships with those individuals whose geography results in less daily or weekly contact. This level also explains the more formal aspect of relationships dictated by community institutions such as the local school or market exchanges such as those that occur at the local grocery or dry cleaners.

The public level of control is the third tier and extends from the private level outward to explain relationships to other outside communities and the corresponding political, economic, social, and even global forces. These include local, state, and national governmental policies, cultural forces, land-controlling elite, and other external actors who affect the organization of a community at both the parochial and private levels. The Chicago example displayed how strong an impact these extralocal forces can exert in local community dynamics, and unfortunately, these external forces have dramatically altered the urban landscape over the last several decades.

Although the traditional focus of social disorganization theories has been to explain delinquency and crime rates, reformulated models have widened this focus to include a host of other individual outcomes such as child maltreatment rates (Coulton, Korbin, Chow, & Su, 1995; Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1996), academic achievement (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996), interpersonal aggression (Griffin, Scheier, Botvin, Diaz, & Miller, 1999), psychological distress (Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger, & Whitbeck, 1996), and fear of crime (Perkins & Taylor, 1996; Taylor, 1984). The importance of Taylor's research resides in his attempt to reign in the overutilization of census data and national samples and focus on a much smaller yet more valid unit, the block. It must be acknowledged that the current study is, in many ways, a response to Taylor's (1997) article which called for a further exploration and investigation into the private and parochial levels of control. The current study follows this prescription to further assess the importance of smaller neighborhood units and their influence on both positive and negative youth outcomes.

Before the details of the current study are discussed, it is important to reiterate that updated social disorganization models found significant effects for measures of social organization other than informal control such as: organizational participation (Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986; Sampson & Groves, 1989), and informal networks and social integration (Elliot et al., 1996). Neighborhood social organization is a systemic concept that involves many transactional relationships with direct and indirect effects. Thus, even the private and parochial levels of community control, the more basic levels, cannot be characterized by just one dimension like informal control. Moreover, the private level of community control is usually enforced through unmeasurable actions such as possible withdrawal of support and respect, direct criticism and ridicule, and ostracism (Black, 1989; Hunter, 1985).

The results of previous studies on the importance of informal control may simply be due to the fact that the field has been constrained to measuring the behavioral components or outcomes of social organization. Yet, this criticism seems minor and perhaps unwarranted since it was not long ago (i.e., 1986) that studies first demonstrated empirical support for the basic mediating variables of social disorganization. When you consider that the theory dates back to the middle and earlier parts of this century, it is not surprising that the model has not been fully delineated. The re-emergence of social disorganization and its reformulated systemic models are still in an embryonic state. While conceptual and methodological improvements (HLM) have advanced theory and empirical support, the field is still struggling for a complete and adequate measure of neighborhood social organization.

The Current Study

There were three main research objectives for the current study. The first research issue was to evaluate the dimensionality of the sense of community (SOC) and self-reported delinquency (SRD) constructs. As previously mentioned, there is still debate in the literature on whether SOC is a unidimensional or multifaceted construct (Hill, 1996). Also, the SOC construct for this study was originally intended to tap into six components although results from pilot studies have only supported a three-factor solution. Thus, examination of the factor structure of SOC construct will add to the growing literature and also direct possible modifications of the measure for future projects by the SOC in Lansing Neighborhoods research team. Since the self-reported delinquency scale utilized for this study tapped into minor, medium, and major offenses, a principal components analysis will verify if youth evidenced differential grouping by these severity levels.

The second goal of the current study was to evaluate the validity of a block-level conceptualization of neighborhood. For instance, are urban blocks large enough to represent a neighborhood? Do blocks within the same administrative unit such as a census tract display differential levels of SOC? While comparisons across neighborhood units can be made, it must be noted that the main focus of this study is the face-block conceptualization of neighborhood and how it corresponds to the private level of community control as postulated by Bursik and Grasmick (1993).

The third research goal of the current study is to ascertain if SOC mediated the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and youth outcome variables such as delinquency, conventional activities, and average grade. It was hypothesized high levels

of neighborhood disadvantage will lead to lower levels of SOC and consequently higher levels of negative youth outcomes. Conversely, low levels of neighborhood disadvantage (neighborhood advantage) will lead to higher levels of SOC and result in higher levels of positive youth outcomes. Related to this research objective, the systemic nature of this construct and its potential for application in future studies and neighborhood developmental efforts will be discussed.

Figure 1

Significant Findings of Mediating Variables From Previous Neighborhood Disadvantage Studies



- 1) Organizational Participation (1986 & 1989)
- 2) Community Disorder-Criminal Subculture (1986)
- 3) Local Friendship Networks (1989)
- 4) Control of Street Corner Youth (1989)
- 5) Social Integration (1996)
- 6) Informal Control (1996)
- 7) Collective Efficacy (CE) (1997)
CE = Social cohesiveness and informal control

Methodology

Procedures

Setting

This research study was conducted in the city of Lansing, Michigan. Lansing is the state capital and an industrial city with a population of approximately 127,000. The Sense of Community in Lansing Neighborhoods Project office is located at Michigan State University in East Lansing. All interviews were conducted in either the homes or on the front porches of the respondents.

Participants

Participants were referred from the local school district. There were 103 tenth grade males who participated in the study along with one of their parents and one of their neighbors. Therefore, for each student there was a total of three interviews (student, parent, and neighbor) for a combined total of 309. Of the 103 youth, 41% were White, 40% were African American, 11% were Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 3% mixed race. As can be seen in Table 1, student respondents closely matched the racial/ethnic percentages of Lansing High School students.

Primary caretakers and neighbors had to be over the age of 18. Only one adult was surveyed at each household to avoid the potential bias or influence of others. Of the 206 participating adults, 67% were female and 67% owned their own homes. The average length of time on the block was approximately 10 years and covered a range from three months to 39 years. An interpreter was utilized to increase Asian respondents since a large percentage were of Hmong descent and many of these youths' parents spoke little or no English.

Recruitment Procedures

This research project was conducted with assistance from the Lansing school district office of research and evaluation services. There was a three-step consent procedure employed to assure that no parent, youth, or neighbor felt coerced to participate. First, the school district provided the research team with 300 mailing labels which were sent out from the school district's own office. The SOC research team mailed an initial letter to these 300 parents which explained the rationale and goals of the study and contained a request for participants (see Appendix A). A self-addressed, stamped postcard was included and parents were instructed to return this postcard if they did *not* want their youth to be included in a pool of possible research participants. The phone number to the SOC project office was also included and parents were encouraged to call if they had any questions, comments, or concerns. Once an adequate time had passed from this initial mailing (3 months), the Lansing school district office of research and evaluation services provided the SOC project team with the names and addresses of 235 parents for an initial 22% refusal rate. This complied with local school district policy, and again, was only the first of a three-step procedure.

For the second component of the recruitment procedure, trained interviewers traveled to the youth's home to explain the study to the youth's primary caretaker and ask if they would like to participate. A follow-up letter with the interviewer's name was left if the primary caregiver was not home or too busy to discuss the study at that time (see Appendix B). If a primary caregiver was home and agreed to participate, the interviewer reviewed the consent form, obtained a signature, and interviewed the parent either at that time or set up an appointment for an interview in the future. At this point of the consent

procedure, an additional 41 students (17%) were dropped because their parents refused to participate. Also, 49 students (21%) were dropped for various reasons including incorrect addresses, if a family moved, or if they did not live on a street where a face-block could be approximated.

In the third component of the consent procedure, each youth was contacted during the initial parent visit, or at a follow-up visit, and asked if they would like to participate. If so, the interviewer reviewed the project assent form (see Appendix C), obtained a signature, and either interviewed the youth then or set up a time for a future interview. So, even if parents signed written consent, only those youths that also assented on their own were included in the study. Of all youth that were approached, only one refused to participate and was dropped from the study. Neighbors were approached via a random sampling procedure and in the same manner as the primary caretaker although only verbal consent was needed for their participation. There were three requirements for a neighbor's participation. They had to be at least 18, agree to participate, and live on the same face-block as the youth.

This three-step consent procedure required a substantial amount of travel time, particularly with hard-to-reach families, but increased the pool of participants by not assuming all families had a working phone. Also, the project's refusal rate was substantially lower than if a telephone interview format had been utilized. One hundred and three families participated out of a possible 186, yielding a 55% response rate. See figure 2 for a graphical summary of the three-step participant recruitment strategy.

Interviewer Training and Supervision

Upper-level, undergraduate psychology students received college credits for participating as part of an independent study course at the University. Initial interviewers were trained for one and a half months prior to the data collection process in a class format which was similar in nature to that of a graduate level seminar. First, interviewers were introduced to seminal works in the area of Sense of Community and delinquency. Second, interviewers were responsible for reading and discussing the recent research on neighborhood studies that incorporated social disorganization theory. Third, interviewers were exposed to methodological issues in community research with an emphasis on interview techniques. Finally, and most importantly, interviewers reviewed the various survey instruments and practiced role-playing interviews until there was adequate consistency in their administration of the survey. Particular attention was paid to the youth interviews and how to build rapport, trust, and explain, in terms that the youths could understand, the meaning of confidentiality. Interviewers that were recruited after this training period received an abbreviated version of this training course. All interviewers were accompanied by a project staff member for their first two interviews.

Also, the project team developed an extensive interviewer training manual which detailed the multiple issues that interviewers may confront and strategies to overcome these potential pitfalls. Approximately 6% of the interviews were coded by two interviewers to assess interrater reliability. Of a total of 868 items, only six were inconsistently marked for an overall agreement rate greater than 99%.

During the data collection phase, interviewers attempted to conduct eight hours of interviews per week. Interviewers were required to go out on different days and times

but were instructed to focus their time during the early evening hours and on weekends. Interviewers also kept a logbook that consisted of the dates, days, and times of attempted contacts in order to facilitate face-to-face contact of all households. More importantly, no household was excluded because it was difficult to establish contact, regardless of the number of times an interviewer had to return. Households with an invalid address (e.g., abandoned, family moved) were returned to the Lansing school district for the correct or updated address. Interviewers also met one time per week for a two-hour supervisory group meeting during the first month and a half of data collection. After this, interviewers met individually for 30-minute sessions with the SOC project coordinator. Project staff were also always available to interviewers for help or feedback as often as needed.

Interview Procedure

Trained interviewers traveled to the youth's homes to conduct the interviews for the study. First, interviewers introduced themselves to the primary caretaker as a project member on the Sense of Community in Lansing Neighborhoods Project team. Each interviewer had a Michigan State University ID card displayed along with the SOC project logo. Interviewers provided a brief scripted introduction and description of the study (see Appendix D) prior to obtaining consent. Again, written consent was obtained from the primary caretaker, written assent from the youth, and verbal consent was obtained from the neighbor prior to interviews.

Face-Block Measures

This study differed from all previous neighborhood studies based on social disorganization theory by directly measuring the proposed independent variables of

income, residential stability, cultural homogeneity, and family composition. Previous studies have all utilized some combination of census indicators or other administrative unit data to derive these measures. In general, income or SES has been measured in numerous ways that are representative of social science research. Most prior studies have summed and standardized a number of measures within a census tract such as: percentage of families below the poverty line, percentage of residents employed in professional or managerial positions, percentage of college educated residents, average income or housing value, etc. Residential stability has most often been calculated as the proportion of families that have moved in the last five years in a census tract. Cultural homogeneity has usually been measured by the presence and number of race/ethnic groups greater than 10% in a census tract. Finally, family composition has been measured in the past by the proportion of single parent families within a census tract.

Another major difference in the current study was the way in which the independent variables were operationalized. The independent variables were conceptualized and measured on a level of advantage versus the traditional method of focusing on levels of disadvantage. It is argued that this modification was more than just a matter of semantics. Researchers need to be more sensitive to the communities under study as what is being investigated surround issues of safety, quality of life, and possible life outcomes of youth in these communities. By conceptualizing and measuring these neighborhoods in a positive manner, the dialogue can change from one focused on deficits to one focused on investigating and explaining the various strengths of these neighborhoods and the people who live within them.

Income

Income was individually calculated by dividing monthly income by the number of residents in the house. To obtain a block income measure, the parent and neighbor's income were simply averaged.

Residential Stability

Individual scale scores (e.g., parent, neighbor) were calculated by summing four likert items such as: (1) People move in and out of this block a lot – reverse coded. Block scores were obtained by averaging the parent and neighbor's total scale score.

Respondents were asked to rate from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) their endorsement of the four items. Reliability was .79 for parents, .70 for the neighbor, and .84 for the block. See Table 2 for all residential stability items and the corrected item-total correlations at the individual level.

Homogeneity

Individual scale scores were calculated by summing two likert items on a five-point scale from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Parent and neighbor's scores were again averaged for the face-block score. Items included: (1) The residents on this block are from my racial/ethnic group, and (2) This block is racially/ethnically diverse – reverse coded.

Composition

Block composition was simply calculated as the percentage of two 'parent' households based on a family structure item. The item asked the parent and neighbor if they had a spouse or live-in partner. Thus, the variable of interest in this study was if there were two adults living in the house, regardless of whether these individuals were

married or if they were the birthparents. Each block could fall into one of three categories: 100% two-parent households, 50% two-parent households, or 0% two-parent households.

Neighborhood advantage (NA)

This composite measure was created by standardizing and summing the four independent variables as proposed by social disorganization theory: income, stability, homogeneity, and composition. Each score on one of these independent variables indicated the degree of advantage shared by residents on that face-block compared to residents on other blocks for that particular variable or category (i.e., block income or block stability). All negatively worded items were reverse coded prior to analyses. Therefore, this composite measure summarized the overall level of advantage for the face-block. Thus, a high block score indicated a greater degree of structural advantage and a low score was indicative of a disadvantaged neighborhood.

Sense of community (SOCtotal)

This scale was created to measure the sense of community that exists on residential face-blocks within an urban community. The SOC in Lansing Neighborhood's Project team originally constructed a six component measure that incorporated 24 items, many of which were from previously published SOC measures. The hypothesized six components include items related to: connection, belonging, support, participation, empowerment, and safety. See Appendix E for a copy of this measure.

Parents and neighbors of the targeted youth were asked to respond to this measure and their scores were averaged to construct the SOCtotal measure for the face-block of

each youth. Respondents were asked to rate from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) their endorsement of the SOC items. Examples include: (1) People on this block socialize with each other, (2) If faced with a problem on the block, residents would be unable to create a solution – reverse coded, and (3) People on this block feel they belong here. All negatively worded items were reverse coded prior to analyses. Alpha was .93 for the parent survey, .92 for the neighbor survey, and .86 for the block.

Individual Youth Measures

There are five elements to the youth survey measure: (1) self-reported delinquency, (2) conventional friends, (3) delinquent peers, (4) conventional activity, and (5) average grade. The vast majority of the items from the youth survey were utilized in Elliot et al.'s (1996) study on neighborhood effects although there were some modifications to the delinquency and drug use sections. See Appendix F for a copy of the youth survey.

Self-Report Delinquency (SRDtotal)

This is a basic self-report delinquency scale that incorporated 17 items. The questions survey a range of delinquent behaviors from minor offenses (e.g., stolen or tried to steal something worth \$5 or less?) to major infractions of the juvenile code (e.g., attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting him or her?). Youth were asked to respond by the number of times in the last year they had performed the specific behaviors. Alpha was .66.

Conventional Friends (CF)

This scale consisted of three questions on prosocial friends. The introductory preface before each question was “How many of your friends ... ” and youth responded

using a five-point scale from 5 (all of them) to 1 (none of them). An example includes:

(1) How many of your friends get good grades in school? Alpha was .60.

Delinquent Peers (DP)

This scale combined five questions on delinquent friends and utilized the same introductory sentence and response scale as the conventional friend's measure. An example includes: (1) How many of your friends use hard drugs? Alpha was .66.

Conventional Activity (CA)

This outcome variable was measured with one item which directly asked the youth for the total number (if any) of school activities, clubs, sport teams, etc. of which he was a member in the past year.

Average Grade

This outcome variable was measured by a question which directly asked for the youth's current grade point average.

Table 1

Race/Ethnic Background of Lansing High School Students & Research Participants

Race/Ethnic Category	Lansing H.S. Students	Research Participants
White	45%	41%
African-American	36%	40%
Hispanic	12%	11%
Asian	7%	6%
Mixed Race	N.A. ^a	3%
Native American	1%	0%

Note. Race/Ethnic background of Lansing H.S. students was obtained from the Lansing school district office of research and evaluation services. Percentages are rounded so can sum to over 100%.

^aN.A. = Not available. Mixed race/ethnicity is not an option on school demographic forms.

Figure 2

Research Participant Recruitment Flowchart

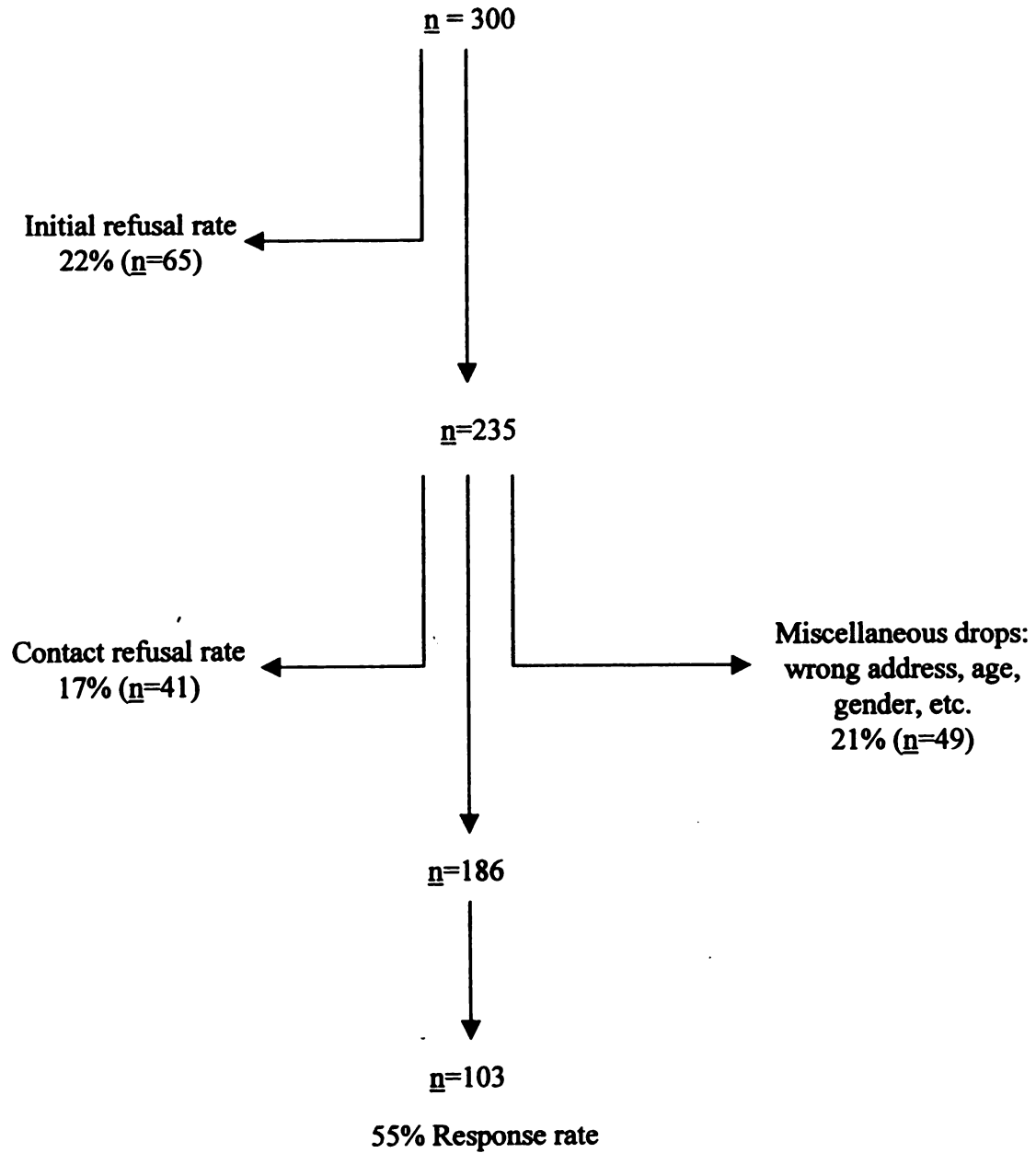


Table 2

Residential Stability Items, Corrected Item-Total Correlations, & Reliability Coefficients for Parent & Neighbor

The majority of the residents on this block rent their houses. (R)^a

When people come to live on this block, they tend not to stay here long. (R)

People move in and out of this block a lot. (R)

I would like to live on this block for at least another five years.

Residential Stability Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation Parent	Corrected Item-Total Correlation Neighbor
Rent their houses	.60	.57
Not to stay	.64	.47
Move in and out	.69	.58
Another five years	.50	.35
Alpha	.79	.70

Note. Reliability at the block-level was .84.

^a(R) = Reverse coded.

Results

Data Analytic Strategy

There were three main research objectives of this study. The first was to evaluate the dimensionality of the sense of community construct as well as the self-reported delinquency scale. The former was accomplished by conducting a series of analyses. First, a principal component analysis was conducted on the SOC construct but its inconclusive results warranted further empirical evaluation of its factor structure. Thus, reliability analyses were conducted on three theoretically-driven components of SOC, which were also partially supported by the principal component analysis, to assess if this construct could measure distinct community processes. A principal component analysis was also performed on the SRD construct to ascertain if the overall scale could be broken down into more meaningful components since the questions differed along severity levels.

The second research goal was to evaluate the validity of a block-level conceptualization of neighborhood. The validity of this conceptualization was assessed in three different ways. First, descriptive statistics were run to evaluate whether or not blocks substantially differed in their levels of neighborhood advantage (NA) and sense of community (SOC). Second, correlations between parent and neighbor scores on the SOC construct were run to ascertain if there was a block-level consensus. Third, discriminant validity was assessed by evaluating the pattern of relationships among NA, SOC, and the various outcome variables.

The third research aim was to evaluate the hypothesis that SOC mediated the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and youth outcomes. Specifically, it

was hypothesized that neighborhood advantage leads to higher levels of sense of community which, in turn, leads to more positive youth outcomes. In a related manner, low levels of block advantage (neighborhood disadvantage) should lead to lower levels of SOC and a greater degree of negative outcomes like delinquency, lower grade point average, etc. Correlation and regression analyses were utilized to assess this contention. By first running correlations, variables and relationships that were not significant were dropped. This helped reduce the number of regression equations required to test for the possible mediating role of SOC in the relationship between neighborhood advantage and positive and negative youth outcomes. At this point in the analyses, the systemic nature of the SOC construct was also investigated.

Research Objective 1: Dimensionality of SOC & SRD Constructs

Principal Component Analysis of the SOC Construct

The dimensionality of the SOC construct was first assessed by conducting a principal component analysis with promax rotation. Although there were six components with eigenvalues greater than one, the scree plot indicated a three or four factor solution. Taking into consideration prior factor analysis from a pilot study, substantive theory, and a desire for parsimony, a three factor solution was chosen. These three factors accounted for a total of 52% of the variance and are labeled emotion, action, and safety (see Appendix G). However, while the PCA helped verify that SOC was indeed multidimensional, the results also presented as many questions as it answered.

For instance, the emotion component accounted for the majority of the variance in the construct as a whole and some of its items that were included fell below the traditional cut-off value of .5. The safety component also contained multiple items from

the other two components. Therefore, it was decided to further examine the factor structure of the instrument by conducting Cronbach's coefficient alpha on the three SOC components for the parent, neighbor, and block-level. Block-level alpha coefficients represent reliability of SOC across the face-block, and thus, incorporated both the parent and neighbor responses to the SOC survey. Next, a brief description of the items that comprise these components and their reliabilities are presented. In addition to reliability coefficients, tables with item-total correlations for each component will be presented since SOC is the major construct in the current study. See Appendix H for a copy of the SOC measure broken down by its three components of emotion, action, and safety.

Emotion. The emotion component of the SOC construct contained 14 items related to connection, belonging, and support among residents on the face-block. This construct measured the emotional connection between residents on the block and was representative of the affective component of SOC. Reliability was .90 for the parent, .88 for the neighbor, and .89 for the block. Table 3 lists all emotion items and corrected item-total correlations for both the parent and neighbor surveys.

Action. The action component of the SOC construct contained eight items pertaining to residents' feelings of empowerment and actual participation in block-related activities. Reliability was .80 for both the parent and neighbor and .84 for the face-block. See Table 4 for a listing of all action items and their corrected item-total correlations at the individual level.

Safety. The safety component contained two items regarding safety issues on the block. While the third component from the PCA included at least two items from the other two components, only the safety items were utilized for theoretical purposes since it

made little sense to create a catch-all component. This is especially true with principal component analysis since this procedure capitalizes on analyzing all of the variance of the items, essentially equating measurement error with shared variance. Reliability was .60 for the parent, .65 for the neighbor, and .63 for the block. Table 5 lists the two safety items and corrected item-total correlations for both the parent and neighbor surveys.

Since the results from the principal components analysis presented some confusion as to the exact factor structure and item composition of each factor for the SOC construct, the results from Cronbach's coefficient alpha were utilized to determine how the construct would be operationalized for the current study. The results from the reliability analyses suggested that it was indeed correct and reliable to interpret the sense of community construct as being composed of these three distinct components of emotion action, and safety. Therefore, all subsequent analyses in the current study utilized a SOCtotal score as well as scores for its three components.

Principal Component Analysis of the SRD Construct

A principal component analysis was conducted on the 17 items from the SRDtotal scale to investigate if there were distinct groupings of delinquent actions within this scale. The scree plot method of determining the number of component loadings with varimax rotation was utilized to determine the factor structure for this construct. While Kaiser's criterion would have resulted in seven separate components, the scree plot indicated a definite four factor solution which captured 57% of the variance. Since some of these components were thought to be highly correlated with each other, a PCA with promax rotation was also conducted. The results were almost identical to the PCA with varimax rotation, minus the order of loadings within the third component, steal and fight

delinquency. It was decided to present and interpret the PCA with varimax rotation since this is the most common method of rotating simple structures in factor analysis. See Table 6 for the component loadings from the PCA.

Of the 17 items entered in the PCA, four were thrown out and were not presented in Table 6 as they did not significantly load on any of the four components. These items were: (Pb1) Gone onto someone's land or into someone's house or building when you weren't suppose to be there?, (Pb8) Been stopped and questioned by police but not arrested?, (Pb14) Carried some sort of hidden weapon (gun, knife, razor blade, etc.) in school?, and (Pb20) Been involved in gang fights? All subsequent analyses utilized a SRDtotal score as well as scores for each of the four components. The following section provides a quick description of the items that comprise each construct along with their reliabilities.

Steal & deal delinquency(SDDel.). This component contained five items. Four of these items related to stealing and one asked if the participant had sold drugs. Alpha was .69.

School delinquency (SchoolDel.). This component contained three items. One item asked about skipping classes while in school and another item asked about skipping a full day of school. The final item in this component asked about carrying a weapon outside of school. The first two items are status offenses and indicative of "minor" delinquency while the third would be a crime if committed by an adult. Alpha was .87.

Steal & fight delinquency (SFDel.). This component was comprised of three items. Two of these items related to stealing and the final item asked if the respondent had fought someone physically in the past year. Alpha was .48.

Severe delinquency (SevereDel.). Two items constituted this component of self-reported delinquency. These two items were on the severe end of the scale and asked the participant if they had attacked someone in the past year, while the other item asked if they used force (may have included a weapon) to take money or things from someone else. Alpha was .52.

Research Objective 2: Evaluating the Validity of the Face-Block as a Neighborhood Unit

Descriptive analyses were run to evaluate if there was adequate variance between blocks on both the independent (NA) and mediating (SOC) variables of social disorganization. This was the first of a three-step procedure to establish the validity of the conceptualization of the urban face-block as a neighborhood entity. As Table 7 illustrates, results indicated that income, stability, homogeneity, composition, and the composite measure of neighborhood advantage vary across the different face-blocks utilized for the study. For instance, the mean of residential stability was 14 with a standard deviation of 3.48. The minimum rating given by a block was 6 while the maximum block rating was 20, which was the highest rating possible. The mediating variable of SOC and its three components also displayed adequate ranges. Emotion had a mean of 48, a standard deviation of 7.27, and covered a range from 33 to 63. SOCtotal and its other two components displayed similar variability across the face-blocks.

Thus, the next step of the validation procedure entailed correlating parent and neighbor responses to SOCtotal and its three components to assess if there was a block-level consensus on the degree of SOC within the neighborhood (see Table 8). Both the uncorrected and corrected correlation coefficients are presented to display the effect of measurement error on block-level correlations for the SOC construct. Since the measures

utilized in the study were reliable, coefficients do not change dramatically when corrected for attenuation. As Table 8 also displays, correlation coefficients were all significant and ranged from small to moderate, with .21 at the lower end and .37 at the upper end. The least amount of agreement was with the emotion component while the highest level of agreement was with the action component.

For the third step, correlations among NA, SOC, and the outcome variables were conducted to assess discriminant validity (see Table 9). Overall, patterns among these constructs conformed to the prediction that high levels of NA and SOC would be related, in direction and magnitude, to positive youth outcomes while low levels of these variables would be related to negative outcomes. For instance, in the case of grade point average, NA, SOC, and all of their components were positively correlated with this variable and coefficients ranged from .02 to .23. However, there were a couple of instances where relationships did not conform to expectations. In the case of one of the delinquency components, steal and deal, both NA and SOC were positively related to this outcome variable. The other case where there was a discrepancy also came from the delinquency construct. For steal and fight, most of the NA components were negatively related while the SOC components were all positively related. Aside from these two deviations, discriminant validity was confirmed in the case of the other two delinquency components, delinquent peers, conventional friends, conventional activity, and grade point average.

Research Objective 3: Sense of Community (SOC) as a Mediator of Neighborhood

Advantage (NA) & Youth Outcomes

Correlation analyses of the independent, mediating, and dependent variables were conducted to reduce the total number of regression equations needed in order to establish a mediating model. The main finding from this initial correlation matrix was that there was no relationship between neighborhood advantage and the outcome variables (see Table 9). Therefore, it was impossible to test the proposed hypothesis that sense of community mediated this relationship. However, since there were multiple indicators for each of the main constructs, it was possible to look at their components and evaluate if there were any mediating relationships in the implied submodel (see Figure 3).

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), three regression equations are required to test for mediating relationships. In the current study, neighborhood advantage was the independent variable and sense of community was the mediating variable. The dependent variable consisted of positive and negative youth outcomes such as delinquency and conventional activity. For the first regression equation, the IV must significantly predict the MV. Second, the MV must be a significant predictor of the DV. Finally, when the DV is regressed on both the IV and MV, the relationship between the DV and MV (SOC) must remain significant while the relationship between the DV and IV (NA) must reduce to a nonsignificant level.

Therefore for organizational purposes, results for the third research objective will be explained in a step-wise fashion following Baron and Kenny's method. First, the relationship between the independent (IV) and mediating variables (MV) and their components were evaluated via correlation analyses. Again, if there was an insignificant

correlation at this stage of analysis, the variables can be dropped or ignored, as there is no possibility of a mediating relationship. For variables that exhibit significant correlations, the second step consisted of adding the dependent variables (DV) and their components to the model. If significant correlations continued to emerge at this stage, the third step required running the combined or multivariate regression equation.

The multivariate regression equation assessed both the independent and mediating variables' ability to predict the dependent variable. For a significant intervening relationship to exist, the mediator (SOC) must have retained a significant effect while the independent variable's (NA) effect must have reduced to a nonsignificant level.

Step 1: Relationship between the Independent (IV) and Mediating Variables (MV) and Their Components

The independent variable, neighborhood advantage (NA), was comprised of four components: block income, block homogeneity, block stability, and block composition. The originally hypothesized six indicators of the mediating variable of sense of community (SOC) were broken down to three components as suggested by the reliability analyses and labeled emotion, action, and safety. See Table 10 for the correlation matrix of these variables. Again, both the uncorrected and corrected correlation coefficients are presented.

As can be seen from the correlation matrix, NA and SOCtotal are significantly correlated (.48). In fact, NA highly correlates with all three components of SOC as indicated by the correlation range of .44 to .63. The components of neighborhood advantage, however, display differential relationships with the components of SOC. Block stability and block homogeneity significantly correlate with SOC and all of its

respective components while block income only significantly correlates with the safety component (.35). Block composition only correlates with the action component of the SOC construct (.20). Overall though, this correlation matrix suggests that there may be mediating paths among the SOC construct and its components with block homogeneity, block stability, and block income.

Step 2: Relationship between the Independent (IVs), Mediating (MVs), & Dependent Variables (DVs) and Their Components

The outcome or dependent variable of self-reported delinquency was also broken down into four components as suggested by the principal components analysis and labeled steal and deal delinquency (SDDel.), school delinquency (SchoolDel.), steal and fight delinquency (SFDel.), and severe delinquency (SevereDel.). Additional outcome variables included in these correlation analyses were conventional activity (CA), conventional friends (CF), delinquent peers (DP), and average grade (see Table 9). The highlighted correlation coefficients in Table 9 indicate where possible mediating relationships may have existed. As can be seen in this table, there was only one outcome variable, conventional activity, that corresponded to the directional hypothesis that SOC mediated the effect of neighborhood advantage on youth outcomes. Thus, only for CA was it necessary to proceed to the third and final step and run a combined or multivariate regression equation to test for a mediating model.

Step 3: Regression Analyses to Test the Hypothesis that SOC Mediates the Relationship Between NA and Youth Outcomes

SOCtotal and its three components significantly correlated with conventional activity (CA) and so did the independent variable of block stability. Thus, there were

four possible mediating paths to test for an intervening relationship between block stability and CA. The independent variable of block income also significantly correlated with CA, but there was only one path to test since block income only significantly correlated with the safety component of the SOC construct. In sum, there were a total of five multivariate regression equations run to evaluate the mediating hypothesis (see Table 11).

For the independent variable of block stability, none of the four SOC paths proved to be a significant mediator (Equations 1 – 4). However, there was a definite pattern toward an intervening relationship as both SOCtotal ($B = .22$, $p = .053$) and emotion ($B = .21$, $p = .059$) closely approached significance while the effect of block stability substantially decreased (Equations 1 – 2).

Again, there was only one possible mediating path to test for an intervening relationship between the SOC construct and block income and this was through the safety component. Results displayed that safety did not mediate the effects of block income on conventional activity (Equation 5).

Table 3

Emotion Items, Corrected Item-Total Correlations, & Reliability Coefficients for Parent & Neighbor

People on this block know each other.
 People on this block socialize with each other.
 People on this block don't trust each other. (R)^a
 People on this block feel connected to each other.
 On this block people talk to each other about community problems.
 People on this block feel isolated from each other. (R)
 People who live on this block think of themselves as a community.
 A feeling of community spirit exists among the residents of this block.
 Residents don't care about the block's future. (R)
 People on this block feel they belong here.
 People on this block take care of each others' plants, pets, kids.
 When someone on this block has a problem, it's hard to get help from neighbors. (R)
 People on this block would give rides to each other if needed.
 People on this block watch out for each other.

Emotion Component Items	Corrected Item- Total Correlation Parent	Corrected Item- Total Correlation Neighbor
Know each other	.48	.55
Socialize with each	.60	.54
Don't trust each	.56	.42
Feel connected to	.74	.66
Talk to each	.65	.43
Feel isolated from	.64	.70
Think of themselves	.67	.63
Feeling of community	.69	.67
Resident's don't care	.56	.56
Feel they belong	.35	.29
Take care of	.69	.51
Has a problem	.55	.60
Would give rides	.54	.44
Watch out for	.78	.61
Alpha	.91	.88

Note. Reliability at the block-level was .89.

^a(R) = Reverse coded.

Table 4

Action Items, Corrected Item-Total Correlations, & Reliability Coefficients for Parent & Neighbor

People on this block participate in social activities (e.g., pot lucks, group garage sales, etc).

People on this block participate in community improvement activities (e.g., community clean-ups, flower plantings, etc.).

People on this block participate in the curbside recycling program.

People on this block participate in neighborhood organizations like block groups, neighborhood watches, neighborhood associations, etc.

People on this block never do things together to improve the block. (R)^a

If faced with a problem on the block, residents would be unable to create a solution. (R)

People on this block have a voice regarding important community issues.

Together, people on this block can persuade the city to respond to their needs and concerns.

Action Component Items	Corrected Item- Total Correlation Parent	Corrected Item- Total Correlation Neighbor
Participate in social	.58	.47
Participate in community	.50	.59
Participate in curbside	.37	.33
Participate in neighborhood	.70	.71
Never do things	.54	.67
Faced with problem	.32	.56
Have a voice	.70	.56
Can persuade city	.54	.52
Alpha	.80	.80

Note. Reliability at the block-level was .84.

^a(R) = Reverse coded.

Table 5

Safety Items, Corrected Item-Total Correlations, & Reliability Coefficients for Parent & Neighbor

It is fairly safe to walk on this block at night.

People on this block make it a safer place to live.

Safety Component Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation Parent	Corrected Item-Total Correlation Neighbor
Safe to walk	.43	.49
Make it safer	.43	.49
Alpha	.60	.65

Note. Reliability at the block-level was .63.

Table 6

Principal Component Analysis of the Self-Reported Delinquency (SRD) Construct

SRD Items	SDDel.	SchoolDel.	SFDel.	SevereDel.	h^2
Stolen > \$50 but < \$100	.84	-.04	.17	.05	.74
Taken some part of a car	.81	.17	.13	-.02	.70
Sold or dealt drugs	.79	.07	.09	.23	.69
Stolen > \$100	.60	.06	-.16	-.09	.39
Stolen something \$5 or less	.60	-.07	.34	.09	.49
Skipped a full day of school	.05	.93	-.02	-.03	.87
Skipped class while in school	-.02	.90	.14	-.02	.83
Carried weapon outside of school	-.04	.78	-.05	.03	.61
Fought someone physically	-.04	.09	.86	.17	.78
Bought, sold, or held stolen goods	.49	.07	.78	.01	.85
Gone into building to steal	-.03	-.10	.71	-.07	.52
Used force to take \$ or things	-.04	-.02	-.02	.92	.85
Attacked someone	.08	.15	.05	.90	.84
Eigenevalues	3.56	2.55	1.81	1.71	

Note. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation. h^2 equals the sum of squared component loadings for each item. SDDel. = steal & deal delinquency; SchoolDel. = school delinquency; SFDel. = steal & fight delinquency; SevereDel. = severe delinquency.

Table 7

Face-Block Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Items	M	SD	Min-Max
Independent				
Income	2	918.48	575.47	122 - 3,750
Stability	4	14.02	3.48	6 – 20
Homogeneity	2	5.65	1.37	3 – 9
Composition	1	1.64	.35	1 – 2
Neighborhood Advantage	4	.02	.59	-1.07 – 1.51
Mediating				
Safety	2	7.63	1.43	4 – 10
Emotion	14	47.97	7.27	33 – 63
Action	8	26.10	4.79	14 – 36
SOCtotal	24	81.69	12.40	55 – 107
Dependent				
SDDel.	5	1.14	2.84	0 – 23
SchoolDel.	3	11.82	32.03	0 – 284
SFDel.	3	2.22	6.63	0 – 64
SevereDel.	2	.25	.85	0 – 7
SRDtotal	17	18.76	36.90	0 – 292
CF	3	10.99	2.01	5 – 15
DP	5	7.58	2.34	5 – 18
Grade	1	2.57	.83	0 – 4
CA	1	1.49	1.45	0 – 5

Note. The Neighborhood Advantage variable is standardized. SDDel. = steal & deal delinquency; SchoolDel. = school delinquency; SFDel. = steal & fight delinquency; SevereDel. = severe delinquency; CF = conventional friends; DP = delinquent peers; CA = conventional activity.

Table 8

Uncorrected & Corrected Correlations of the SOC Construct Between Parent & Neighbor

Sense of Community Construct	Uncorrected Correlations	Corrected Correlations
Emotion	.20*	.21*
Action	.33**	.37**
Safety	.29**	.37**
SOCtotal	.29**	.30**

Note. To obtain the corrected correlation, the bivariate correlation is divided by the square root of the reliability of the measure.

*** $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.**

Table 9

Correlation Matrix of Independent (IVs), Mediating (MVs), & Dependent Variables (DVs)

Variables	DVs								
	SDD.	SchD.	SFD.	SevD.	SRDt.	DP	CF	CA	Grade
IVs									
Income	.01	-.12	-.05	.13	-.14	.01	.19	.22*	.12
Stability	.04	-.04	-.05	-.29**	-.08	-.18	.09	.19*	.08
Homog.	.22*	.05	.04	-.10	.08	-.09	-.11	-.07	-.02
Comp.	.00	.11	-.17	.03	.06	.19	-.13	.01	.10
NA	.11	.00	-.10	-.10	-.04	-.03	.02	.15	.13
MVs									
Emotion	.21*	-.14	.13	-.18	-.07	-.03	.05	.26**	.06
Action	.25**	-.09	.10	-.06	-.03	.00	.14	.23*	.23*
Safety	.13	.05	.07	-.07	.06	-.01	.03	.20*	.02
SOCtotal	.24*	-.11	.12	-.14	-.05	-.01	.10	.26**	.12

Note. Bolded correlation coefficients indicate potential mediating models which require further regression analyses. SDD. = stealing & dealing; SchD. = school delinquency; SFD. = stealing & fighting; SevD. = severe delinquency; DP = delinquent peers; CF = conventional friends; CA = conventional activity; NA = neighborhood advantage; Grade = average grade for the past school year.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Figure 3
Measurement Model

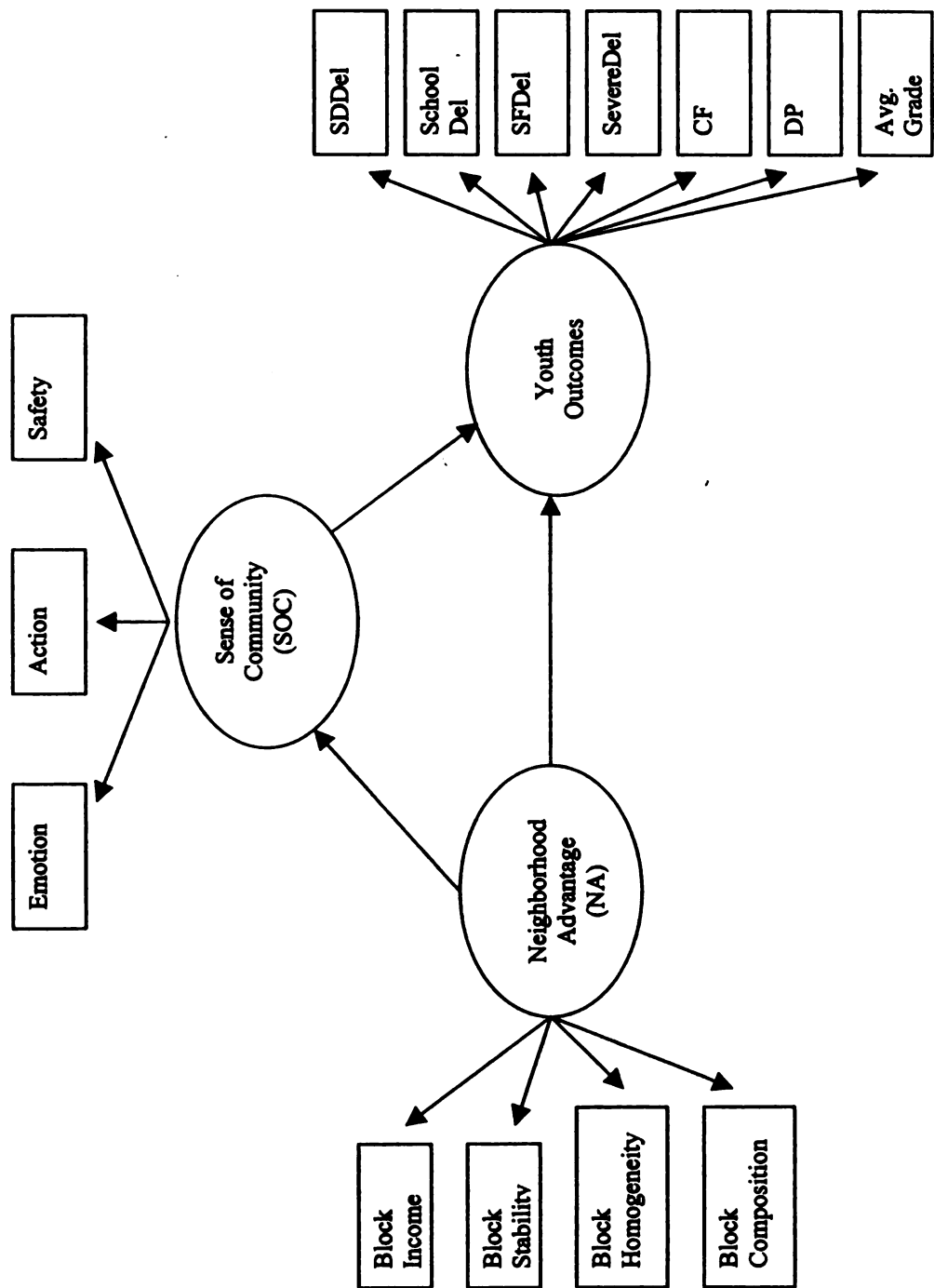


Table 10

Uncorrected & Corrected Correlation Matrix of Independent (IVs) & Mediating Variables (MVs)

MVs	<u>IVs</u>									
	NA	NA ^a	\$	\$ ^a	BH.	BH. ^a	BS.	BS. ^a	BC.	BC. ^a
Emotion	.44**	.47**	.15	.16	.28**	.30**	.49**	.60**	.11	.12
Action	.39**	.44**	.15	.17	.21*	.23*	.37**	.48**	.18	.20*
Safety	.50**	.63**	.28**	.35**	.26**	.33**	.57**	.72**	.09	.11
SOCtotal	.46**	.48**	.18	.19	.28**	.29**	.49**	.59**	.15	.16

Note. Corrected correlations were obtained by dividing the bivariate correlation by the square root of the reliability of the measure. NA = neighborhood advantage; \$ = block income; BH. = block homogeneity; BS. = block stability; BC. = block composition.

^aIndicates correlations that were corrected for attenuation due to measurement error.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 11

OLS Regression Estimates of Conventional Activity (CA)

Regression Equations	<u>Conventional Activity (CA)</u>			
	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i> -ratio
Equation 1				
Block Stability	.13	.16	.09	.790
SOCtotal	.03	.01	.22	1.96
Equation 2				
Block Stability	.13	.16	.09	.830
Emotion	.04	.02	.21	1.91
Equation 3				
Block Stability	.19	.15	.13	1.23
Action	.05	.03	.18	1.72
Equation 4				
Block Stability	.17	.17	.12	1.02
Safety	.13	.12	.13	1.09
Equation 5				
Block Income	.26	.15	.18	1.81
Safety	.15	.10	.15	1.47

Note. Equations 1 – 5 represent all possible mediating paths for conventional activity.

Discussion

Research Objective 1: Dimensionality of the SOC & SRD Constructs

The first goal of the current study was to examine the factor structure of the SOC construct since previous publications have called attention to the lack of consistent findings for either a unidimensional or multidimensional solution (Hill, 1996). The results from the present study certainly do not resolve the confusion surrounding the dimensionality and composition of the SOC construct. The results from the principal component analysis tentatively indicated that the SOC construct contained three components that accounted for 52% of the variance and loaded according to whether the item measured an emotion, action, or safety component of the neighborhood. However, there were several results from the PCA which contradicted this multidimensional interpretation, or at the least, the exact item composition of each of the three components. For instance, the emotion component accounted for a considerable degree of the overall variance and the safety component included items from the other two constructs and really created a catch-all component that made little theoretical sense. Therefore, reliability analyses were conducted on all of the items hypothesized to fall into the emotion, action, and safety components. As these results indicated, reliability coefficients were all in the adequate range and it was decided to follow these empirical results and continue analyses with these three factors. In sum, similar to the sense of community index and most theoretical writings on the topic, the SOC measure in this study proved to be multidimensional and could quantify distinct aspects of community life.

As Chavis and Pretty (1999) recommend, the field could benefit from a collaborative effort to develop a standardized SOC measure. Presently, the most common measure employed, the short form of the sense of community index, suffers from reliability problems (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999). Utilizing four separate sets of data, these authors found that the overall reliability of the short form of the SCI index ranged from .64 to .69. The four subscale reliabilities rarely approached acceptable levels and ranged from .16 to .72. Comparatively, the reliability of the SOC scale was impressive. For parents, the reliability of the overall scale, SOCtotal, was .93. Parent alpha for the emotion component was .90, action component was .80, and safety component was .60. Neighbor and block reliability scores also displayed similar loadings on SOC and its three components.

There certainly is a need for collaboration in the field as the proliferation of new SOC measures, like the one utilized in the current study, inhibit comparisons across studies and limits community psychology's understanding of one of its overarching values. However, rather than simply returning to the long form of the SCI (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999), there is enough empirical data on various SOC scales that a thorough review of their commonalties and strengths is warranted. Such a practical approach can build upon what has been learned since the sense of community index was first presented (Chavis et al., 1986).

The results of this study also found that the self-reported delinquency scale could be separated into meaningful components. Specifically, four components accounted for 57% of the variance. Two of the components mainly consisted of stealing items while one component dealt overwhelmingly with school issues and the final component dealt

with severe delinquency. Thus, a strength of the self-report delinquency scale was that it allowed differentiation between minor delinquency (e.g., stole \$5 or less) and severe delinquency (e.g., attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting him or her?). More importantly, it allowed one to assess if some neighborhoods created an environment where certain types of delinquency proliferated.

Research Objective 2: Evaluating the Validity of the Face-Block as a Neighborhood Unit

The face-block or block-level conceptualization of neighborhood, as formulated by Bursik and Grasmick (1993), represents the smallest and most immediate geographic area around one's home. It is only one of three important neighborhood units postulated to affect community dynamics but most likely exerts the most influence and is the focus of the current study. Descriptive statistics were computed to begin the assessment of the validity of both NA and SOC at the block-level. Results vividly displayed that urban blocks differentially possess both the exogenous structural characteristics and the mediating social characteristics as proposed by social disorganization theory. One interesting finding was that many of these face-blocks were nested within the same census tract yet displayed strikingly different results on both the exogenous and mediating variables proposed by social disorganization theory. In essence, while it is reasonable to conceive of neighborhoods at a census tract level, results indicate it may be more ecologically valid and meaningful to urban residents to conceive of their neighborhood in a much smaller and objective unit. Thus, for a true contextual analysis of neighborhoods and how they influence their inhabitants, the results of this study indicated that it is necessary to begin from the block-level and build up to larger neighborhood systems. This finding supports Bursik and Grasmick's (1993) updated

social disorganization model which utilizes three levels of community control (private, parochial, and public) to explain delinquency rates within urban areas.

Correlations were also run to ascertain whether or not there was a block-level consensus on these constructs. For the SOC construct, correlations between parent and neighbor were all significant and responses ranged from a low of .21 to a high of .37. While these correlations were significant and indicate a block-level consensus of sense of community, they were only in the small to moderate ranges. It was hoped that there would be greater block-level consensus and that coefficients would range from moderate to high. However, only two respondents were assessed to create a face-block summary measure due to the time-consuming nature of the neighborhood surveys. Future studies should improve upon the current endeavor by interviewing more households per block.

Discriminant validity was assessed by evaluating how the NA and SOC constructs related to each other and the various positive and negative youth outcomes. Results supported the prediction that high levels of NA would translate into high levels of SOC. For instance, block homogeneity, block stability, and the composite measure of neighborhood advantage significantly correlated with SOC and all of its components. When corrected for attenuation, correlations ranged from moderate to large with the correlation between block stability and safety reaching .72.

An important finding regarding the independent and mediating variables was that block income only correlated with the safety component of SOC (.35). While lower income neighborhoods were not perceived to be as safe as other neighborhoods, it did not have a significant impact on the emotional attachment residents felt toward their neighborhood or on residents' participation in neighborhood organizations and activities.

Meanwhile, block stability significantly related to SOC and all of its components. Correlations ranged from .48 to .72 and thus dwarfed the effects of income in this study. This finding points to the importance of not limiting analyses of neighborhood effects to just the income level or SES of the neighborhood. In this study, block instability exerts considerably more deleterious effects than low income. Nevertheless, the main point is that it is not simply residential stability or income level, or any other independent variable, but the combination of these variables that usually leads to the extreme disparity between disadvantaged and advantaged neighborhoods across the United States.

Another interesting finding from the components of the independent variable neighborhood advantage was the fact that block composition only significantly correlated with the action component of the SOC construct. The sample for this study had a large percentage of dual parent families in contrast to some neighborhood studies where single parent families predominate within a community. Perhaps, as others have hypothesized, there is a tipping point or threshold that must be surpassed before the collective supervision capacity of a village suffers (Simons et al., 1996).

Discriminant validity was also assessed by evaluating how both positive and negative outcome variables related to NA and SOC. In seven of the nine outcome variables, the majority of NA and SOC components correlated with the outcome variables in the expected direction. Many of these correlation coefficients were also at significant levels. In one of the two deviating cases, steal and deal, both NA and SOC correlated in the opposite direction as expected. In this case, higher structural and social organizational levels resulted in greater negative outcomes and this finding will be discussed at length later. For the other variable, steal and fight, NA correlated in the

expected direction but SOC positively correlated with the outcome variable. These contradictory findings both came from the self-report delinquency measure and involved items on stealing.

Overall, validity of the face-block as a neighborhood unit was established. This result validates previous research on blocks, which found that they are indeed valid and meaningful neighborhood units for urban residents (Perkins & Taylor, 1996; Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1984). Unfortunately however, the overwhelming majority of researchers continue to utilize census tract to define a neighborhood (Coulton, Korbin, & Su, 1996; Gonzalez et al., 1996). While there is a tremendous amount of information collected at the census tract level, any true contextual analysis of neighborhoods must begin at the block-level and build up to this larger neighborhood system.

Research Objective 3: Sense of Community (SOC) as a Mediator of Neighborhood

Advantage (NA) & Youth Outcomes

The third guiding research goal and main hypothesis of the study was that SOC mediated the relationship between neighborhood advantage and youth outcomes. This hypothesis did not hold under empirical investigation. In fact, none of the components of neighborhood advantage significantly correlated with any of the outcome variables. Also, the proposed mediating variable of SOC only correlated with one of the five delinquency outcomes and conventional activity. Although the overall model proved insignificant, implied submodels were tested since there were multiple indicators for all of the main variables in the study. This investigation of the submodels also corresponded to the stated research issue of exploring the systemic and applicable nature of the SOC

construct. Thus, a strength of the proposed mediator is that researchers can test the various dimensions of the SOC construct for possible differential effects on youth outcomes. Moreover, it is argued that a comprehensive and systemic construct like SOC is needed to truly measure the dynamic nature of urban areas. For instance, this multidimensionality even allows researchers the ability to make distinctions among communities that may have similar overall SOC scores but substantially different totals among the three components of emotion, action, and safety.

The results from the submodels displayed that only one outcome variable could be tested for the directional hypothesis that SOC mediated the effect of NA on youth outcomes. This outcome variable was conventional activity and was defined as the number of school activities the youth participated in the past year. Although results indicated that none of the SOC components were significant mediators, both SOC_{total} and emotion approached statistically significant levels. Considering the small sample size, this finding seems to indicate that youth reared in communities characterized by a high level of SOC, especially those with a greater degree of emotional attachment, are more likely to bond to and participate in conventional activities. Further, participation in school activities was the best predictor of good grades in this study. Thus, youth from high SOC neighborhoods participated more in school activities and attained more success in the school environment than youth in low SOC neighborhoods. Therefore, it seems quite evident that the neighborhood microsystem has an important impact on youth's attitudes and behaviors outside of that specific setting.

While some research has been completed on both an adolescent's neighborhood SOC and school SOC (Pretty, Andrews, & Collett, 1994; Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler,

& Williams, 1996), future research should incorporate the school microsystem to a much greater extent and its relationship with neighborhood SOC. A greater understanding of the relationship between these two settings and their impact on youth outcomes would certainly aid in developing a positive and supportive context for all youth. Further, it could also direct possible interventions for those youth who are experiencing turmoil in one or both of these important developmental settings.

Although CA was the only dependent variable that met the criteria for the main hypothesis of the study, steal and deal delinquency also evidenced a significant correlation with both NA and SOC components. However, it was not evaluated because the current study had a directional hypothesis. If the direction of the hypothesis was ignored, there would have been three possible paths to test for this outcome variable. While two of these paths proved to be nonsignificant, the action component of SOC was found to mediate the effect of block homogeneity on stealing and dealing. In the multivariate regression equation, action retains its significant effect ($B = .22$) while block homogeneity drops to an insignificant level ($B = .18$). Thus, neighborhoods characterized by a greater degree of both NA and SOC led to increased stealing and dealing delinquency rates.

This result poses serious problems for the social disorganization model in general and particularly for the main hypothesis of this study. However, this finding is not shocking when one considers the perpetual debate in the field of criminology as to what self-report scales and official records of delinquency measure. In general, official records have been criticized as simply reflecting the bias in police practices and record keeping while self-report measures have been criticized for equating minor delinquency with the

more serious infractions that comprise the uniform crime reports (Hagan, Gillis, & Chan, 1978; Sampson, 1986). Since steal and deal is one of the more minor scales of the overall self-reported delinquency construct, it certainly could follow that structural advantage and sense of community levels have little to no influence on this type of offending pattern compared to its role in more severe delinquency. While recent social disorganization studies have found support for explaining self-report and victimization data, it is worthwhile to note that the study that launched social disorganization's re-emergence found distinct pattern differences between self-report and official delinquency (Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986). Unfortunately, this line of inquiry cannot be tested in the current study since only self-report measures of delinquency were collected, and, any conclusion regarding these largely null findings are unwarranted at this time.

Overall, the lack of significant findings for the proposed mediating model and submodels may simply be due to the fact that this was a city-based study. In an extensive review of the literature on neighborhood effects (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000), it was found that national and multisite studies had a much better chance of finding significant effects than city-based studies. This is due to the greater sampling variability of neighborhoods and greater sample sizes in national studies. In a city-based study such as this one, higher intercorrelations among neighborhood dimensions leads to a higher probability of a null finding. The current study also had a sample size only slightly greater than 100 and this limited the power to detect significant effects.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study which warrant attention. First, results from the principal component analysis of the SOC construct were largely inconclusive

and indicative of the controversy in the field regarding the dimensionality of the SOC construct. For the self-reported delinquency construct, there were two components that suffered from reliability problems. Both steal and fight delinquency ($\text{Alpha} = .48$) and severe delinquency ($\text{Alpha} = .52$) had inadequate reliability levels. Another major drawback in the current study was that block income was utilized as one of the major independent variables versus the traditional method of measuring SES in social disorganization studies. Therefore, caution must be taken in the interpretation of the role SES exerts on the level of sense of community within a neighborhood and its influence on youth outcomes such as delinquency.

Implications for Future Research

This study has shown that the urban face-block is a valid way to conceptualize and measure both the independent and mediating variables as proposed by social disorganization theory. This corresponds with previous work from the SOC in Lansing Neighborhoods Project where it was found that there is constant variation in SOC levels from block to block within the same census tract. Previous project research also found that higher SOC levels were positively related to voter turnout in local elections and participation in recycling, and negatively to fear of crime and actual criminal activity on the block (Schweitzer, Kim, & Mackin, 1999). Other research at the block-level has also found validity for this unit of analysis and its relationship to informal control, crime, fear of crime, and SOC (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Perkins & Taylor, 1996; Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Gottfredson, & Brower, 1984).

While a strong argument has been made for understanding block-level dynamics in an urban setting, this study does not mean to neglect the larger communities and forces which affect both the structural and social composition of urban blocks. Updated, systemic social disorganization models attempt to explain community effects on delinquency and other youth outcomes at the local level by incorporating the role and influence of these outside economic, political, social, and even global forces. Future research needs to combine various neighborhood levels, such as the private, parochial, and public, in order to gain a more complete understanding of how these outside forces influence block-level dynamics, and, ultimately individual youth outcomes (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993).

This study was, in part, instigated by Taylor's (1997) call for a greater degree of scrutiny at the most immediate source of neighborhood social control, the primary level. Utilizing sense of community as a potential mediating variable for social disorganization theory, this study extended our understanding of local neighborhood dynamics. As this study has shown, there is great variability in the structural and social dimensions across urban blocks, even within the same community. Previous research has also found that programs based on census tract averages will not be sensitive enough to build upon the varied strengths and deficits of neighborhoods within the same census tract (Caughy, O'Campo, & Brodsky, 1999). If the main goal of neighborhood effects research is to utilize results to direct neighborhood development and intervention programs, variability across blocks must be captured and understood for successful program implementation. Thus, it is recommended that future neighborhood studies should incorporate the urban or face-block as the primary unit of analysis.

Moreover, as recent work on community building has found, successful programs need to be strengths-based, consistent with the values of the local community, and devised and implemented by local citizens (McNeely, 1999). Thus, successful community development programs call for grassroots action that is best approached at the block-level. Block associations are the most typical of such programs and success at this level can result in greater participation and empowerment (Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990) and possibly lead to participation in larger neighborhood organizations that form to combat more macrolevel problems like child maltreatment, delinquency, and high school dropout rates. Again, the field needs to start small and

understand block-level processes before attempting to understand and solve larger (e.g., parochial, census tract) neighborhood processes and problems.

Sense of community is a systemic and applicable construct unlike previous measures utilized in neighborhood studies. Incorporation of this construct into the mediating model of neighborhood effects could ultimately lead to successful neighborhood development efforts and prevention and intervention programs for youth. Research on the importance of understanding the influence of the neighborhood microsystem has evolved considerably in the last two decades. It is now time for this research to go beyond an explanatory framework and out into the neighborhoods. By investigating SOC at the face-block level, researchers, neighborhood leaders and organizers could come together in their efforts to create, foster, and maintain healthy communities. As neighborhood leaders and organizations implement various policies and programs, evaluators could work alongside studying their effects: block-by-block. Research findings could then be utilized to inform federal and state policymakers of successful neighborhood development policies and programs.

In addition to directing youth intervention and neighborhood redevelopment programs, the SOC construct also corresponds to community psychology's goal of operating on a prevention or health promotion level. Efforts to increase SOC within a neighborhood will lead to more positive outcomes for all children and adolescents as well as greater ratings of quality of life for all community residents. In closing, as Hill (1996) stated, "We could concentrate on forming healthy communities, and rely on the communities to form healthy individuals. Then we could truly become community psychologists" (p. 437).

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Initial Letter to Parents

**Sense of Community in Lansing neighborhoods Project
Michigan State University Urban Affairs Program
W-29 Owen Graduate Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48823-1109**

Dear Parent:

You may have heard the expression that "it takes a village to raise a child." As part of the Sense of Community in Lansing Neighborhoods Project, we are studying the impact of neighborhoods on public school children in Lansing. Your child was selected by lottery through cooperation with the Lansing School District to be part of this study.

Some time within the next several months, one of the interviewers from Michigan State University's Sense of Community team will visit you at your home to seek your consent to include your child in the study. If you agree, the interviewer will survey you, your child, and one or two of your neighbors. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes to complete, and participation will be completely voluntary.

Any information you, your child, or neighbor provides will remain strictly confidential. Within these restrictions, results will be made available to you at the completion of the study in the Fall of 2000.

Because the goal of this study will help us to understand the lives and development of all the children in Lansing, I hope that you will agree to participate. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 353-9145 or 353-9144 (voice mail). If you would rather not participate in the study, please return the self-addressed, stamped postcard.

Sincerely yours,

**John Schweitzer
Professor, Urban Affairs Programs**

Appendix B
Follow-up Letter to Parents

**Sense of Community in Lansing Neighborhoods Project
Michigan State University Urban Affairs Program
W-29 Owen Graduate Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48823-1109**

Dear Parent:

This is a follow-up to the initial letter we mailed to you in late May regarding MSU's Sense of Community Study (SOC) study. Some time within in the next couple of days, I will be stopping by again to see if you would like to participate in the study. Again, we are trying to evaluate how neighborhood cohesion may affect a child or teenager's development. We hope that this research can be utilized in Lansing to foster community development and cohesion to the benefit of everyone in the community, particularly our youth.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you and one of your neighbors to get an idea of the Sense of Community on your block. I will also talk to your 10th grade son about his school, activities, and friends. I hope that you can participate and look forward to talking to you about your neighborhood. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact the Sense of Community project office at 353-9145 or 353-9144 (voice mail). Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

SOC Project Interviewer

Appendix C
Youth Assent Form

Youth Assent Form

Hi. My name is _____ from Michigan State University. We're working on a study that looks at how living in certain neighborhoods affects youth, like you, who live there. I have spoken to one of your parents who said that it is O.K. if I talk to you. Before we begin, I would like to make sure that it is also O.K. with you. I will ask you questions about your school, friends, and outside activities. Everything that you tell me will remain completely confidential. This means that only members of this study, like myself, will have access to this information and I will not share it with anyone else like your parents, friends, school, police, etc.

Why is this (confidentiality) necessary?

- *Some of the questions deal with legal and illegal activities often committed by youth. Confidentiality assures you that what you say is between you and me and will not be reported to any outside party.*
- *Confidentiality assures you that I will not tell anyone anything that you tell me. This is always a necessary component when you talk to individuals about their behaviors, perceptions, etc.*

It is important for you to know that it is your choice if you want to answer our questions. Also, if you do choose to answer our questions, you can still refuse to answer any question that bothers you. By signing your name below, you are showing me that the study has been fully explained to you and that you are choosing to participate. So, if it is O.K. to speak with you, can you please sign your name on the line below.

_____ Participant signature Date _____

- Make sure to clarify any questions the student may have.
- Emphasize and explain confidentiality in language they understand.
- If unable to complete interview then, ask if another day/time would be better.

Appendix D
Parent Introduction

Sense of Community Introduction

Hello. My name is _____ from Michigan State University. We're working on a study that evaluates the Sense of Community (SOC) in Lansing neighborhoods. By SOC, we want to know your feelings about this block – how people get along, if they feel safe, and if they enjoy living in this neighborhood, etc. It is our goal to understand how a strong community can aid in the positive development of youth that reside there.

We recently mailed a letter to you regarding this study and I wanted to know if you could take some time to answer a survey about your perceptions of SOC on this immediate block along with some questions about your child/teen? *(Provide them with a copy of the letter and explain the exact dimensions of their face-block).*

YES – O.K. then, first I need to review this consent form with you in order to conduct the survey. Provide respondent with a copy and review the form with them highlighting the numbered items. Have them sign your copy and let them keep their copy of the consent form.

NO – O.K., thanks for your time and have a good day.

- If the person is hesitant, find out if a different time or day would be better.
- If the person wants to know how long it takes, make sure to let them know that it depends on how much they have to say but that it will probably take around 20 - 30 minutes.
- Refer to John Schweitzer if the person has concerns or questions about the survey (353-9144).
- Respondent needs to be at least 18 years old. Ask if you are unsure.

Appendix E
SOC Measure with Six Components

Sense of Community Measure

Connection

- C1. People on this block know each other.
- C2. People on this block socialize with each other.
- C3. People on this block don't trust each other. (R)
- C4. People on this block feel connected to each other.
- C5. On this block people talk to each other about community problems.
- C6. People on this block feel isolated from each other. (R)

Belonging

- B1. People who live on this block think of themselves as a community.
- B2. A feeling of community spirit exists among the residents on this block.
- B3. Residents don't care about the block's future. (R)
- B4. People on this block feel they belong here.

Support

- S1. People on this block take care of each other's plants, pets, kids.
- S2. When someone on this block has a problem, it's hard to get help from neighbors. (R)
- S3. People on this block would give rides to each other if needed.
- S4. People on this block watch out for each other.

Participation

- P1. People on this block participate in social activities (e.g., potlucks, group garage sales, etc.).
- P2. People on this block participate in community improvement activities (e.g., community clean-ups, flower plantings, etc.).
- P3. People on this block participate in the curbside recycling program.
- P4. People on this block participate in neighborhood organizations like block groups, neighborhood watches, neighborhood associations, etc.

Empowerment

- E1. People on this block never do things together to improve the block. (R)
- E2. If faced with a problem on the block, residents would be unable to create a solution. (R)
- E3. People on this block have a voice regarding important community issues.
- E4. Together, people on this block can persuade the city to respond to their needs and concerns.

Safety

- SA1. It is fairly safe to walk on this block at night.
- SA2. The People on this block make it a safer place to live.

Appendix F
Youth Survey

Youth Survey

Prosocial Competence

Personal Efficacy

The majority of questions that I am going to ask you will require that you answer with the specific # of times you have performed a certain behavior. Or, they will require you to answer with the responses I provide you. For the first three questions, I would like you to use these following response options – Give card and review categories slowly.

Response Category – (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, (1) Strongly Disagree.

5. Strongly Agree

[You should use this category if you have a strongly held response to the statement. By this, I mean that this statement is very true of you – your behavior, perception, belief, etc.]

4. Agree

[You should use this response if the statement is true about you but not as descriptive or true as the previous choice]

3. Neutral

[That the statement is neither true nor false about you or does not really apply to you.]

2. Disagree

[You should use this response if the statement about you is false]

1. Strongly Disagree

[That the statement is definitely false and it elicits a very strong response – it is definitely not you]

- *Before we begin, I'd also like to inform you that there are no right or wrong answers to this survey. I want you to be completely honest, as everything you tell me will remain confidential – in other words, between you and me. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

1. ____ When people I know are having problems, I feel like I should try to help them.
2. ____ There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have. (R)
3. ____ I can do just about anything I set my mind to.

Educational Expectations

Response Category - # or Year

1. ____ How far do you think you will actually go in school?

Grades

Response Category - # or letter

1. ____ Average school grade for the past year.

Commitment to Conventionality

Response Category – Record in # of minutes per day

1. ____ Average time spent on homework and studying each night.

Response Category: (5) Very Important, (4) Pretty Important, (3) Somewhat Important, (2) Not Too Important, (1) Not Important at all.

2. ____ Importance of grades.
3. ____ Importance of education for getting a job later on.

Involvement in Conventional Activity

Response Category - # activities youth is involved in:

1. ____ School activities such as student government, clubs, sports, band, choir, etc.
2. ____ Community sports teams.
3. ____ Community activities such as scouts, service clubs, Boys & Girls' Club, YMCA, etc.
4. ____ Religious youth groups.

Peer Involvement

Prosocial Friends & Delinquent Peers

How many of your friends ...

Response Category: (5) All of them, (4) Most of them, (3) Half of them, (2) Few of them, and (1) None of them.

1. ____ Get good grades in school?
2. ____ Rob or bully someone into giving you something?
3. ____ Break into buildings?
4. ____ Are interested in school?
5. ____ Sell drugs?
6. ____ Use marijuana?
7. ____ Use hard drugs?
8. ____ Attend school regularly?

Problem Behaviors

Delinquency

How many times in the past year have you ...

Response Category - #

1. ____ Gone onto someone's land or into someone's house or building when you weren't suppose to be there?*
2. ____ Purposely set fire to a house, building, car, or other property or tried to do so?
3. ____ Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?
4. ____ Fought someone physically?*
5. ____ Stolen or tried to steal something worth \$5 or less?

6. _____ Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than \$50 but less than \$100?
7. _____ Stolen or tried to steal something worth \$100 or more?
8. _____ Been stopped and questioned by police but not arrested?*
9. _____ Knowingly bought, sold, or held stolen goods or tried to do any of these things?
10. _____ Snatched someone's purse, wallet, or picked someone's pocket?
11. _____ Taken some part of a car (includes radio) without permission from the owner?*
12. _____ Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?*
13. _____ Skipped a full day of school?*
14. _____ Carried some sort of hidden weapon (gun, knife, razor blade, etc.) in school?*
15. _____ Carried a gun or knife for protection - outside of school?
16. _____ Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting him or her?
17. _____ Used force (may or may not include a weapon) to take money or things from people?
18. _____ Sold or dealt drugs?
19. _____ Skipped class when you were in school?*
20. _____ Been involved in gang fights?

Drug Use

How many times in the past year have you ...

Response Category - #

1. _____ Used marijuana?
2. _____ Used paint, glue, or other things you inhale?
3. _____ Consumed alcohol until intoxicated?
4. _____ Used drugs or pills, other than marijuana?

Arrests

Response Category – Y/N with #

1. _____ Have you been arrested in the last year?
2. _____ If so, how many times (in the last year)?

Appendix G

Principal Component Analysis of the SOC Construct

Table 12

Principal Component Analysis of the Sense of Community (SOC) Construct

SOC Items	Emotion	Action	Safety	h^2
Know each other	.93	.05	-.36	.99
Socialize with each other	.78	.09	-.18	.65
Think of themselves as a community	.71	.09	.03	.51
Feel connected to each other	.70	.09	.14	.52
Feel isolated from each other	.62	.08	.19	.42
Watch out for each other	.44	.08	.37	.34
Would give rides to each other	.40	-.05	.23	.22
Take care of each others' plants, etc.	.31	.23	.16	.17
Participate in community improvement	.02	.89	-.22	.84
Have a voice ... community issues	-.04	.73	.04	.54
Participate in neighborhood organizations	.03	.70	.15	.51
Participate in social activities	.32	.59	-.29	.53
Never do things to improve the block	.09	.54	.27	.37
Feeling of community spirit exists	.26	.51	.19	.36
Talk to each other ... community	.15	.48	-.04	.25
Persuade the city to respond	-.15	.46	.39	.39
Don't trust each other	.25	-.46	.80	.91
Don't care about the block's future	-.03	.17	.76	.61
Feel they belong here	-.15	-.06	.66	.47
Participate in curbside recycling	-.40	.24	.60	.58
Make it a safer place to live	.08	.23	.59	.41
Hard to get help from neighbors	.30	-.11	.59	.45
Unable to create a solution	.02	.33	.46	.32
Fairly safe to walk on block at night	.36	-.08	.40	.30
Eigenvalues	8.72	2.19	1.60	

Note. Principal component analysis with promax rotation. h^2 equals the sum of squared component loadings for each item.

Appendix H
SOC's Three Components

SOC's Three Components

Emotion

- C1. People on this block know each other.
- C2. People on this block socialize with each other.
- C3. People on this block don't trust each other. (R)
- C4. People on this block feel connected to each other.
- C5. On this block people talk to each other about community problems.
- C6. People on this block feel isolated from each other. (R)
- B1. People who live on this block think of themselves as a community.
- B2. A feeling of community spirit exists among the residents on this block.
- B3. Residents don't care about the block's future. (R)
- B4. People on this block feel they belong here.
- S1. People on this block take care of each other's plants, pets, kids.
- S2. When someone on this block has a problem, it's hard to get help from neighbors. (R)
- S3. People on this block would give rides to each other if needed.
- S4. People on this block watch out for each other.

Action

- P1. People on this block participate in social activities (e.g., potlucks, group garage sales, etc.).
- P2. People on this block participate in community improvement activities (e.g., community clean-ups, flower plantings, etc.).
- P3. People on this block participate in the curbside recycling program.
- P4. People on this block participate in neighborhood organizations like block groups, neighborhood watches, neighborhood associations, etc.
- E1. People on this block never do things together to improve the block. (R)
- E2. If faced with a problem on the block, residents would be unable to create a solution. (R)
- E3. People on this block have a voice regarding important community issues.
- E4. Together, people on this block can persuade the city to respond to their needs and concerns.

Safety

- SA1. It is fairly safe to walk on this block at night.
- SA2. The people on this block make it a safer place to live.

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