

Contextual influences on adolescent risk behavior: Community

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There is considerable evidence that characteristics of the neighborhood in which one lives have implications for youth health and development (Brooks-Gunn, et al., 1993; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 1999; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, 1997). Research has shown that neighborhood conditions are associated with a host of developmental outcomes including youth violence (Chung & Steinberg, 2006; Loeber & Wikstrom, 1993; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls., 1997; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Henry, 2004) academic achievement (e.g., (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993; Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991; Duncan, 1994; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1994; Halpern-Felsher et al., 1997), social competence (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 1999; Kupersmidt, Griesler, DeRosier, Patterson, & Davis, 1995), and aggression (e.g., (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Loeber & Wikstrom, 1993; Lynam et al., 2000; Peeples & Loeber, 1994). Much of this work has focused on the structural characteristics of neighborhoods, most notably concentrated disadvantage, and geographic segregation of both poor and minority groups.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on community and neighborhood impact on adolescent behavior. It is important to note that the most influential recent work has focused on identifying aspects of community characteristics related to increased delinquency or crime occurring within a specific neighborhood or community (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson, 2001), not to individual development. Although this work is extremely important and is obviously critical in aiding intervention and guiding policy, the focus here is on how community context relates to individual development and specifically, adolescent risk and development. That is, how does where one lives relate both directly and in interaction with other important developmental contexts (through other types of risk and protective factors, e.g. family, peers) to individual development Because the large majority of neighborhood effects research has

focused on urban settings, much of what is known about neighborhood effects focuses primarily on youth and families living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods within inner-city and urban poor communities.

What key mechanisms or features of communities uniquely affect adolescent behavior?

Community and Neighborhood Characteristics. Early work on neighborhoods focused on evaluating the associations among structural and socioeconomic neighborhood characteristics—such as poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity—and behaviors and outcomes of youth living in different neighborhoods (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Crane, 1991). For example, community-level variations in population and housing density, family disruption (i.e., percent single-parent households), and residential mobility were found to be positively related to variations in community-level aggression and crime (Bursik, 1988; Byrne & Sampson, 1986). In most studies, however, indicators of neighborhood influences were applied without much theoretical explanation of the expected relation among the indicators or mechanisms through which they might influence youth outcomes. Neighborhood structural characteristics were simply considered markers of risk, without a model of the processes through which these characteristics might affect youth development.

In part spurred by a review of the literature by Jencks and Mayer (1990) implicating social processes as important in understanding the effects of growing up in poor neighborhoods and later by the work of Sampson and others (Sampson, 1997; Sampson et al., 1997) building from the seminal work of Shaw and McKay (1942), research began to focus not just on structural characteristics, but also the social processes or social organization within neighborhoods (Gorman-Smith et al., 2000; Sampson et al., 1997; Tolan, et al., 2004; Wilson, 1987). This work was based in a theoretical model which suggests that, within some neighborhoods, the structural barriers (e.g.,

concentrated poverty, mobility, percent home ownership, etc.) of the neighborhood can impede the development of neighborhood social organization. In turn, lack of neighborhood social organization relates to increased risk for a variety of types of problems and behaviors among residents of the neighborhood (Elliott, et al., 1996; Sampson et al., 1997; Tolan et al., 2004). This conceptualization moved beyond simply noting neighborhood as merely a geographical unit and marker of risk to including the social relationships among residents.

Subsequent research has supported the theory that both structure and social processes are important (Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001; Sampson et al., 1997; Tolan et al., 2004). Several studies have found both direct and indirect effects of community structural characteristics. These studies have found the influence of neighborhood structural factors on youth to be partially, but not fully, mediated by neighborhood social processes, which are partly, but not completely, shaped by neighborhood structural and socioeconomic constraints (Chung & Steinberg, 2006).

However, despite empirical evidence suggesting that both structure and process are important in understanding risk, there remains a large literature focused almost exclusively on community structure, typically measures of poverty, and relation to risk and protection. This is likely due in part to the fact that census data and other sources of archival data are relatively easy to access, particularly when compared to measures of social process. This may also be attributable to misunderstanding of the theory. Because the theory suggests that community structure relates to neighborhood social organization, some investigators have argued that structural characteristics can serve as proxy for “neighborhood” characteristics. While to some extent this may be true when evaluating broad differences in extent of risk, this approach does not advance understanding of how or why neighborhood matters. Important also is that previous research has shown that these are two distinct constructs that may not necessarily be highly related. For example, we found little relationship between these two constructs in a study conducted in urban poor neighborhoods in

Chicago, with concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood social organization only modestly correlated ($r = -.23$). These data are consistent with other findings that suggest there are neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated disadvantage and high levels of social organization – extremely impoverished neighborhoods in which families report feeling connected, supported and a sense of belonging, and that these social processes within neighborhoods serve a protective role in (Buka, Stichick, Birdthistle, & Earls, 2001; Gorman-Smith et al., 2000). These and other data support the importance of considering both aspects of neighborhood and not assuming that concentrated disadvantage can be considered in isolation or as representing all aspects of neighborhood risk.

What aspects of community structure and neighborhood social processes are important in understanding adolescent behavior?

Community Structure

As stated earlier, much of the research on neighborhood effects has focused primarily on the effects of concentrated disadvantage/poverty. Concentrated disadvantage has been linked with a wide array of adolescent outcomes including teenage childbearing, delinquency, violence, depression and dropping out of high school (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997). Essentially, children and youth growing up in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage are at increased risk for any number of behavioral and social problems.

Other aspects of community structure have also been examined, including residential stability, percent single-parent families, ethnic heterogeneity, and home ownership. The data on these specific aspects of community are mixed, with less strong relationships between adolescent outcomes found. Though mixed, the strongest set of relationships (next to poverty) are found for residential instability and low home ownership (Brooks-Gunn, et al., 1997; Ross, Reynolds, & Geis, 2000). These aspects of community are related to disruptions in neighborhood social organization.

Built Environment

Although the physical deterioration of urban communities has been noted as potentially related to the social organization of the neighborhood and risk for problem behaviors among youth (Sampson, 1997; Wilson, 1987), little empirical work has been conducted to identify what specific aspects of the architectural structure and urban design features might be related to neighborhood social organization and risk. Research in environmental psychology has documented that “gross” aspects of neighborhood disorder such as graffiti, litter, abandoned buildings, and dilapidated buildings create environments in which people are fearful (Fisher & Nasar, 1992; Nasar & Fisher, 1993; Taylor, Shumaker & Gottfredson, 1985). In addition to abandoned and neglected areas, this research suggests that certain physical structures such as multifamily units with little foliage induce greater fear than single family housing (Nasar, Stamps, & Hanyu, 1995). Because people tend to avoid areas that induce fear, there are fewer people to monitor the activities in the common areas of those streets or neighborhoods (Nasar & Fisher, 1993). Crime statistics show a clear relation between physical spaces which are dilapidated or neglected and increased risk for crime activity (Newman, 1972; Taylor, 1989). These findings have been based on relatively gross indicators of the built environment that could be easily identified by social scientists. There are, however, likely other aspects of the built environment that have been identified by practitioners in architecture and town planning that may have important implications for the social organization of the neighborhood or may have a direct relation to risk. However, adequate documentation of the most pertinent features and empirical evaluation of their impact has not yet occurred. Furthermore, those studies that have posited relationships between risk or fear and specific aspects of environment have tended to focus on the relation of only one aspect of the physical environment. An area of architecture and urban design that may be able to provide some direction is New Urbanism (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, & Speck, 2000).

New Urbanism is based upon the ideals of community design of the early 1900s when residences were typically located closer to each other, providing greater opportunities for support and involvement. A major tenet of the theory guiding New Urbanism is that smaller neighborhoods

promote a greater connection to others and increased opportunity to interact with other community members. Neighborhoods that are diverse in population and use are hypothesized to enhance neighborhood social processes. Following from this hypothesis, it is suggested that civic, business, residential and recreational buildings and space should be built in close proximity. One benefit of this approach to planning is that increased shared monitoring and support is likely because residents know one another. Having businesses and residences close to one another creates less dependence on cars, so residents can walk within the neighborhood and become familiar with their neighbors, resulting in increased interest in monitoring neighborhood activities. In addition, the construction of town squares and other public gathering places create additional spaces where residents can socialize and provides informal opportunities for social support.

There is some empirical evidence that the built environment, specifically land use, is related to child behavioral and academic outcomes. Based on New Urbanist theory, a transdisciplinary team of scientists developed a built an intensive environment coding system based on a survey of the physical characteristics of “streetscape blocks” (Lombard et al., 2006). Because a “streetscape block” consists of the street and its facing blocks (rather than a platted block, which is a contiguous block surrounded by roadways on four sides), it coincides with the daily experience of residents, who tend to interact most frequently and directly with this immediately visible and accessible part of their environment (Spokane et al., 2007). An analysis of the relationship between diversity of land use and children’s school conduct grades showed that children living on mixed-use blocks (i.e., those blocks made up of both residential and commercial lots), had higher academic grades and better classroom conduct grades. This finding lends support to the New Urbanist hypothesis that mixed-use blocks are beneficial for children, perhaps due to increased opportunity for informal social control and social cohesion among residents (Spokane et al., 2007; Szapocznik et al., 2006). These findings suggest that public policy targeting the built environment may be a mechanism for

community-based interventions to enhance children's classroom conduct, and potentially related outcomes.

Land use is just one aspect of the physical environment that may have a significant relationship to child behavioral, cognitive, and mental health outcomes. For example, noise has been shown to impact reading scores and long-term memory; there is also some evidence that it may impact mental health and motivation among children. There are various mechanisms that have been theorized to account for the relationship between noise exposure and child outcomes, including attention reallocation, physiological responses such as elevated blood pressure, and strains on interpersonal relationships, particularly with adults. Crowding and resource availability, in both the home and school environments, has been shown to be related to aggression, withdrawal, mental health problems, and cognitive processes in children and teenagers. Theory predicts that crowding and limited resources leads to decreased adult monitoring of children, decreased social support among adults, and increased conflict due to competition for resources such as toys; a few studies have begun to examine the physiological impact of crowding, with some significant results warranting further research in this area (Evans, 2006).

Just as New Urbanist theory predicts that mixed-use blocks impact child and youth outcomes via the impact of physical structure on social processes, there is theoretical support for the hypothesis that other aspects of the physical environment, such as noise and crowding, serve as mediating processes that impact child outcomes indirectly through social processes. While numerous studies have shown a relationship between factors of the physical environment (such as noise, crowding, and chaos) and a range of child outcomes (including academic functioning, mental health, and social behavior), the overwhelming majority of these studies do not establish causality, nor do they control for social processes. Some researchers have addressed these issues through establishment of dose-response curves, as well as conducting longitudinal studies and intervention

studies. As highlighted in Evans' (2006) review of the literature, the theoretical framework underlying the impact of the physical environment upon human development is multi-layered and ripe for further development and empirical testing.

Neighborhood Social Processes

Two major reviews of the neighborhood effects literature found little consistency in the way social processes have been theoretically considered, defined or measured across the large number of studies in the field (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). Both agreed there was need for both better theory regarding the relation to individual risk and consideration of multiple aspects of neighborhood social processes within the same study to better understand the contributions of each to risk and to better inform intervention and prevention. As noted by Sampson and colleagues (2002), many of the constructs measured within studies are intercorrelated, raising the question of independence of constructs, the need to differentiate different aspects of neighborhood processes, and the explanatory value gained in differentiating these processes versus treating all as a single higher-order construct. Among Sampson et al.'s criticisms was the inconsistency in how the processes were conceptualized and the fact that "neighborhood" characteristics have most often been measured at the individual level. Our reading of the literature is that there is basis for considering several distinct but interrelated constructs that fall under a rubric of neighborhood social processes. While each has some independence, they may differ as to how and when they affect risk (including protecting against risk).

Through this review, we have identified four broad constructs that appear to be important in understanding the process through which neighborhood social processes relate to adolescent risk and development and may be helpful in guiding prevention and intervention efforts. These constructs include: 1) social support and connection, 2) informal social control; 3) social norms; and 4) routine activities. Importantly, while these constructs might interrelate when the focus is only on

neighborhood differences in rate, this does not represent a single construct when interest is in variation of impact within neighborhood, nor when the question of interest is on youth development. Each of these constructs has been the focus of a strain of literature and has been shown to have some empirical value in youth behavior, with much of this work focused on delinquency, crime, and/or youth violence. It should be noted, however, that there is a fair amount of inconsistency within the literature regarding definition and measurement of each of these constructs.

Social Connection and Support. Social connection and support have emerged from studies of neighborhood factors, in particular, the protective role related to engagement in social relationships or networks that provide help with management of daily life and social challenges (Szapocznik & Coatsworth, 1999). Individuals and families embedded in networks of social connection are able to access social and practical support when needed (Shinn & Toohey, 2003; Szapocznik & Coatsworth, 1999). Social support and connection are viewed as important in helping to support parents and parenting, particularly in highly stressed neighborhoods (McCord, 1994). Parents connected to others facing similar environmental and developmental challenges can be helped in managing the extraordinary challenges faced (Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 1997). Social connection and support found within neighborhoods has also been found to be protective for adolescents, again, particularly for those living in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods (Beyers, Bates, Pettit, & Dodge, 2003; Wright, Botticello, & Aneshensel, 2006).

However, social connection may not be positive if the connection is within a community with norms that support use of violence. Some investigators have found a protective effect of low connection to others. For example, Brodsky (1996) found a protective effect of social isolation for African American youth in Washington DC neighborhoods. Similarly, Caughy, O'Campo and

Muntaner (2003) found a protective effect of low social connection on child mental health problems for families living in poor distressed communities. For families living in less distressed communities, the opposite relation was found. Higher risk for mental health problems were reported for families reporting low social connection who were living in less disadvantaged neighborhoods. Related, others have found that the nature of social connections are important and need to be considered more carefully. Warner and Rountree (1997) measured social ties within neighborhoods as the average proportion of persons within each neighborhood engaging in activities such as having meals, borrowing food or materials, or generally helping out. They found social ties related to decreased crime only in predominately white neighborhoods, with the effect on crime nonsignificant in predominately minority neighborhoods. They hypothesized these differences might be related to the limited breadth of social networks within minority communities, limited ties to external institutions such as the police or, again, the norms held within the neighborhood. These same investigators found gender differences in the effects of social ties on crime, with strong social ties among women and not men related to decreased crime in their sample (Rountree & Warner, 1999). These and other data point to the conditional link between social ties and connection and risk and protection.

Neighborhood-level social norms. Although neighborhood norms are frequently brought to bear as theoretical explanations for social problems, there is little research on norms at the neighborhood level of analysis. Studies that have undertaken this level of organization of norms have provided mixed results, often with complex patterns. For example, using data from the Philadelphia Teen Study (PTS), Teitler (1996) created census tract level measures of adult norms for adolescent sexual initiation by aggregating individual responses on attitude measures from the PTS. He found that norms were related to youth sexual behavior in primarily white neighborhoods but not in African-American neighborhoods. In further analysis, Teitler and Weiss (2000) found that, among

adolescents, the influence of neighborhood norms was mediated through high school attendance. This may suggest the importance of assessing developmental differences in how neighborhood norms affect risk. For example, McDonnell (2007) evaluated the effects of efforts by residents and authorities to enforce neighborhood norms about the safety of children and found that the extent to which neighbors were vigilant predicted individual parents' attention to child safety. Analyzing data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey, Musick, Seltzer, and Schwartz (2008) examined the effects of neighborhood adult injunctive norms against adolescent smoking, drinking, and drug use on adolescent smoking, drinking, and drug use. They found that neighborhoods with strong norms (high adult disapproval of smoking and other substance use) combined with high child-centered social control (a component of collective efficacy), related to lower levels of youth smoking. Similarly, Aherna and colleagues (Aherna, Galea, Hubbard, & Symea, 2009) reported that neighborhood norms about adolescent smoking moderated the effect of collective efficacy, with collective efficacy related to more smoking in neighborhoods with norms more accepting of smoking and related to less smoking when neighborhood norms suggested less acceptance of adolescent smoking.

Informal Social Control. Social control is central to sociologic theory of neighborhood mechanisms related to crime. Indeed, while psychology highlights the role of social support and connection in aiding mental health and in supporting roles such as parenting, social disorganization theory highlights the role of social ties and support as necessary for the development of social control or felt sense of efficacy about and ownership of neighborhood functioning, order, and safety. Social control refers generally “to the capacity of a group to regulate its members according to desired principles – to realize collective, as opposed to forced goals” (Sampson et al., 1997), p. 918). Examples of informal social control include parental willingness to manage child behaviors in the neighborhood, promoting pride in caring for private and public areas, and intervening when

others are disturbing or disrupting public space. Perhaps the most influential study is the report of Sampson and colleagues (1997), who found that the relation of neighborhood structural characteristics to crime was mediated by collective efficacy, which as measured in that study represents most fundamentally the construct of social control or “willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good” (p. 919). Notably, this measure emerged from factor analytic work of measures based in interest in social control with some additional measurement of social connections. While suggesting the commonality of these by neighborhood, this construct and the measure that emerged in that study may not capture the differences these components of collective efficacy bridges.

Much of the previous work has focused on social control as a unitary construct, with neighborhoods having either high or low levels of social control. High levels of social control are seen as relating to low levels of crime and low levels of social control related to high levels of crime. There has been little attention, however, to the multiple aspects of social control or differences in the ways in which social control might be managed for youth at different developmental stages.

Routine Activities. Routine activities represent how members of the neighborhood use the land and resources available, as well as their daily routines or patterns of behavior. The basic theory is that the more an individual’s daily routine exposes him to a stimulus for a given outcome, the more likely the outcome. For example, the more an adolescent walks by a liquor store with groups of adults drinking outside, the greater the chance for being drawn in or hassled. In social disorganization theory, institutions are viewed as mediating the link between structural conditions and violence. From this view, disadvantaged neighborhoods have difficulty attracting and maintaining the types of local institutions that impede violent behavior by providing stability and alternative activities for those living in the neighborhood (Peterson, Krivo, & Harris, 2000). Inner-

city neighborhoods tend to have fewer basic institutions such as stores, banks, libraries and recreational facilities that provide regular access to jobs and stable social resources, and tend to have more problematic institutions such as bars and liquor stores. The institutions available and the use of those institutions set a pattern for interaction. The construct as relevant for adolescent behavior includes two aspects of activity: 1) the types of institutions available and 2) the use of those institutions – the social patterns of activity.

Studies that have considered routine activities have most often measured only the presence of institutions such as schools, stores, liquor stores, gas stations, vacant lots, parks (e.g., Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Smith, Frazee, & Davison, 2000) and used these as proxies for activity. For example, LaGrange (1999) evaluated the relation of different types of institutions (e.g., shopping malls, public schools) and found high rates of property crime in areas with shopping malls and high schools. These findings are explained by suggesting that each of these structures generate a steady flow of traffic in and out of the area, contributing to the convergence of potential offenders and impeding guardianship by making it more difficult to distinguish who should and should not be in the area. Peterson et al. (2000), taking a similar approach, found the presence of bars related to increase in violent crime. Notably, they also found a relation between recreation centers and crime. A greater prevalence of recreation centers was related to reduced violent crime, at least in the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. These findings suggest specificity of both type of institution and neighborhood.

Community and Neighborhood Characteristics and Interaction with other Important Developmental Influences

In an ecological approach to child and adolescent development, neighborhood is but one of four primary contexts for development. In addition to neighborhoods, development is most directly

influenced by families, peers, and schools. Like neighborhoods, school influences can be conceived as a mix of structural and social characteristics. In addition, schools share a significant overlap in geographic space with the neighborhood(s) that they serve, creating difficulties in disentangling the confounding influences of schools and neighborhoods. As such, a discussion of interactions between neighborhood and school influences is beyond the scope of this chapter. In contrast, families and peers are frequently nested within neighborhoods and are influenced by the neighborhoods in which they reside.

Developmental Ecology of Neighborhoods, Families, and Risk. There is emerging evidence that community structural characteristics and the social organization of the neighborhood have an influence on family functioning and its relation to risk (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 1997; Gorman-Smith, Tolan & Henry, 1999; Ingoldsby et al., 2006; Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, Hiraga, & Grove, 1994). Studies suggest that across communities that are similar in regard to structural dimensions such as poverty and single-parenthood, there are significant differences in neighborhood social organization and networks that relate to differences in the ways families function and how parents manage their children (Furstenberg, 1993; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980; Sampson & Laub, 1994; Sullivan, 1989). For example, in a study of parenting among single mothers in poor, urban neighborhoods, Furstenberg (1993) found that those residing in the most dangerous neighborhood adapted to this environment by isolating themselves and their families from those around them. While this served to increase the mother's sense of safety, it also cut her off from potential social supports. Similarly, Jarrett (1997) found that parents in poor neighborhoods often use "bounding" techniques that restrict children to their homes and limit access to neighborhood influences, particularly peers. In the Yonkers project, parents who moved to middle-income neighborhoods used less restrictive monitoring practices with adolescents than did parents who stayed in low-income neighborhoods (Briggs, 1997). Other research has pointed to the importance of "precision

parenting” in poor, urban neighborhoods (Gonzalez, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, & Hiraga, 1996). That is, in some urban neighborhoods, the relation between parental monitoring and involvement is such that both too little and too much is associated with increased behavior problems among youth. This curvilinear relation is not found in studies of families residing in other types of neighborhoods.

Others have found differences in the way parenting practices may relate to youth outcome depending on community residence. Gorman-Smith et al. (1999) reported that parenting practices did not mediate stress effects on delinquency in inner-city communities, but did so in poor, but less impoverished urban communities. This was the case even though there were no differences in average level scores on parenting practices scales between the two community types. These same investigators (2000) compared the impact of different parenting practices and family relationship patterns in inner-city communities with high and low neighborhood social organization, and each of these to poor but not inner-city urban communities. Overall, families with strong parenting practices but low levels of cohesion and emotional support had lower risk than those with poor parenting. However, these families were more likely than those with both strong parenting and family cohesion to have a child involved in serious and chronic delinquency. However, this was not the case if families with these parenting patterns lived in neighborhoods with high social organization; their children were not more likely to be involved in serious and chronic delinquency. It may be that when emotional needs, such as a sense of belonging and support, are met by the neighborhood, the risk carried by the family is minimized. Accordingly, interventions focused on family functioning may have different effects depending on neighborhood characteristics or changes in family functioning may have a different relation to outcome depending on neighborhood context (Gorman-Smith et al., 2007; Metropolitan Area Child Study Research Group, 2002).

Neighborhoods and Peer Influences. An extensive body of research has consistently established a relation between the behavior and attitudes of one's peers/friends and adolescents' own behavior (e.g., Bauman & Ennett, 1996; Henry, Schoeny, Deptula, & Slavick, 2007; Kandel, 1978, Mounts & Steinberg, 1995). However, with few exceptions (e.g., Kerr, Stattin & Kiesner, 2007; Kiesner & Pastore, 2005), the vast majority of studies that consider social networks influences on adolescent risk have been centered on schools (e.g., Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997) and many limited the choice of friends to children within the same classroom (e.g., Henry & Kobus, 2007). As such, these studies have ignored peer groups from outside the school. Out of school peers tend to be more heterogeneous in regard to age and gender than those in school (Allen, 1989; Smith & Inder, 1990), and antisocial youth are more likely than non-antisocial youth to have close friends outside of the school setting (Dishion, French, & Patterson., 1995). Since adolescents engage frequently in risky behaviors outside the bounds of the school, greater consideration of the neighborhood as a setting for peer influence and the interactions between neighborhood characteristics (i.e., structural and social) and peer influences.

A recent longitudinal study of all 10-18 year old youth in a self-contained city in Sweden provides some insight into the nature of peer influences in the neighborhood context rather than the school context (Kerr et al., 2007; Kiesner, Kerr, & Stattin, 2004). By including all youth in the entire community, neighborhood-based peers as well as school-based peers are considered.. Initial cross-sectional findings from this study indicate that individual level of antisocial behavior is significantly higher among youth who spend time with their best friend during their "free-time" compared to those who spend time with their best friend at school (Kiesner et al., 2004). Also, individuals who met their best friend in the neighborhood reported significantly higher antisocial behavior than those who met their best friend in school or in some "other" location. These results

suggest a role of the neighborhood environment in understanding adolescent risk and peer influences. Further research is needed.

Interventions

Despite the growing understanding and appreciation of community influences on adolescent risk taking, evaluations of interventions that target communities remain limited in number and scope. A number of approaches may be taken to impact community influences on adolescent risk taking. These interventions range from “micro-level” interventions that aim to intervene directly with the individuals who live in a target community to “macro-level” interventions that target the characteristics of the community directly.

One way to apply knowledge of community influences on adolescent risk is to develop interventions that target the adolescents and their families. From a developmental-ecological framework, (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1988), adolescent actors are embedded within multiple nested settings including family, peers, schools, communities, and the broader society. As such, by altering the characteristics of the individual or of his/her proximal settings (e.g., family, peers), one is able to affect the ways in which the distal settings (e.g., community) influence the individual. By targeting protective factors, characteristics that reduce the negative impact of other community-level influences, these interventions leave the community unchanged, but serve to “immunize” the adolescents from existing community-level risk.

Community coalitions and partnerships are a promising approach for delivering interventions designed to enhance the lives of residents and to reduce the negative effects of community risk factors. Community coalitions are particularly promising modes of intervention because they allow the community to address problem behaviors that are of particular concern to community members and have greater potential to empower the community and to become self-

sustaining. Ultimately, these coalitions have the potential to alter the community itself as they work to protect the residents against risk factors inherent in their community. Additionally, by engaging community members in the process of improving the lives of youth who live in the local community, these community coalitions can lead toward greater empowerment and can enhance the social fabric of the community. A limitation of many of the existing community coalitions is that they often implement untested interventions that have no empirical evidence of efficacy.

Two examples of university-community partnerships that rely on interventions with evidence of efficacy through rigorous evaluations are *PROMoting School–community–university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER)*; Spoth, Greenberg, Bierman, & Redmond, 2004) and *Communities that Care (CTC)*; Hawkins, Catalano, & Arthur, 2002). The PROSPER model employs a community-university partnership that leverages the strengths of two existing systems, the land-grant university Cooperative Extension System and public school systems. Targeting individual school districts, the PROSPER model seeks to implement evidence-based interventions designed to reduce adolescent substance use. In this model, prevention coordinators at the Cooperative Extension System serve as liaisons between university researchers and community-based teams (i.e., representatives from the local school district, community-based service agencies, and other local stakeholders). Selecting from a menu of evidence-based interventions, the community team determines the most appropriate intervention for their setting and addresses local issues like staffing and participant recruitment. Training and technical assistance is then provided through the Cooperative Extension System to ensure that the intervention is delivered with fidelity. In an initial evaluation of the PROSPER model, 28 school districts were randomly assigned to either treatment or control condition. In the treatment condition, partnerships implemented interventions targeting substance abuse among a cohort of sixth grade students. During sixth grade, families in the treatment condition were offered the *Strengthening Families Program*, a seven-session family group

intervention designed to enhance parenting skills (e.g., nurturing, limit setting) and youth skills (e.g., prosocial behavior, peer resistance). Subsequently, when the students were in seventh grade, each site administered 1 of 3 school-based interventions designed to reduce risk for substance use.

Results of the study indicated that there were significant treatment effects across a range of measures of substance use including lifetime use, initiation and past year use.

An example of an intervention that works at multiple levels of the social ecology is CeaseFire, a violence prevention project developed by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention. CeaseFire targets Chicago neighborhoods that are characterized by both concentrated poverty and high levels of violent crime. In target neighborhoods, CeaseFire works with community agencies to mobilize residents to take action against crime and violence in their neighborhoods. CeaseFire and partner agencies organize marches, rallies, and vigils (i.e., in reaction to shootings/killings). These community mobilization activities are coupled with public education campaigns aimed at changing norms and attitudes about violence. CeaseFire also has engaged the clergy serving the target communities. Clergy participate in community mobilization activities, serve as community opinion leaders through sermons and work with parishioners, and provide safe havens (e.g., church gymnasiums) for neighborhood youth. A fourth component of the community-level interventions, CeaseFire works with law enforcement to ensure tighter enforcement of existing laws and to increase the police response to shootings and killings in target communities.

At the individual level, CeaseFire takes a targeted approach. Staffed by outreach workers and violence interrupters, CeaseFire works with those at highest risk for involvement in violence. Outreach workers work “on the streets” of target neighborhoods, seeking to identify high-risk individuals, develop a trusting relationship, and encourage “clients” to consider alternatives to life on the streets and in gangs. Outreach workers help link clients to a variety of services designed to lower their risk for involvement in violence (e.g., education, employment, substance abuse

treatment). Similar to outreach workers, violence interrupters work on the streets of target communities, developing information networks and identifying those at immediate risk for violence (e.g., gang members, friends/family of victims). As their title suggests, violence interrupters work to diffuse volatile and potentially violent situations when they arise and to mediate conflicts between gangs in the community.

An evaluation of CeaseFire (Skogan, Hartnett, Bump, & DuBois, 2009) found evidence of positive effects of the CeaseFire intervention. Analyzing violent crime incident data, the evaluation compared trends in CeaseFire communities to demographically-similar comparison communities. In five of seven communities, the evaluation results suggest decreases in shootings that could be attributable to the intervention. The evaluation came to similar conclusions about the impact of CeaseFire using two other methods: 1) hot-spot analysis in which concentrated areas of shooting became more diffuse following the introduction of CeaseFire and community-level decreases in shooting and homicides in CeaseFire communities, and 2) network analysis of retaliatory violence between rival gangs. Though promising, these results are best interpreted as preliminary. As with many evaluations of community-level interventions, there are a number of limitations that must be considered. Most importantly, target and comparison communities were not randomly selected. Though efforts were made to demographically match comparison communities, there were likely multiple differences that were unaccounted. Another important limitation is that, due in part to the small number of CeaseFire communities, the evaluation was unable to disaggregate the multiple facets of the intervention. This is a critical limitation for dissemination because there is no guidance for those who may wish to implement CeaseFire but lack the resources to include all components. As additional communities within Chicago and cities across the country adopt the CeaseFire model, we hope that continued evaluation will shed light on these issues and enhance our understanding of the effects of CeaseFire and other community interventions.

Though still relatively rare, there have been an increasing number of interventions that work primarily at the community level. These interventions are designed to alter the community structural characteristics and corresponding social processes shown to be central to adolescent risk behavior, with a specific focus on changing the antecedents of criminal behaviors. For purposes of this chapter, we consider only community-level interventions that target changes in the structural and social characteristics of the community without dramatically altering the residential population of the community. While crime rates go down as a result of “economic revitalization” that occurs as a result of residential displacement through processes such as gentrification and public housing relocation projects, these effects provide little insight into the processes through which community characteristics affect youth risk. . The choice to exclude interventions that focus on moving residents from or into certain neighborhoods highlights the importance of residential mobility as an issue that should be considered in all community-level research. High rates of residential mobility are common among inner-city and urban poor neighborhoods, making studies of social processes difficult due to the ever-changing population base in each neighborhood.

Though many of these community-level crime prevention initiatives have failed to show significant effects on crime, early results from an evaluation of business improvement districts (BID) in Los Angeles show evidence of some benefits from these community-level interventions. BIDs use special assessments of business owners to fund services that supplement the existing municipal services. The exact services are determined by the members of the BID based on the needs of the local setting. Their impact on community crime stems from the frequent focus on safety and efforts to enhance/maintain the physical space surrounding the member businesses. Using official crime data, two evaluations of BIDs in Los Angeles have shown that BIDs are associated with significant reductions in crime, especially robberies (Brooks, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2009). These results, however, should be interpreted with caution. First, the BIDs are self-selected, making causal

attributions difficult. It may be that the characteristics that led businesses in a community to form a BID would have been responsible for drops in crime in the absence of a BID. Further, changing residential composition and gentrification was associated with the greatest decreases in robberies. Again, it is unclear what the process was that led to these changes, but they are potential confounds to the attribution of causal effects.

Conclusions

The literature reviewed here provides strong support for the perspective that multiple social-ecological factors, including community and neighborhood characteristics, relate to individual risk and development (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson et al., 2003). These studies suggest that developmental trajectories and the role of risk factors vary across community types. Where one lives matters as it relates to both individual development and other influences on risk (e.g., family and peer). A focus on only one may limit full understanding of the influences on risk. When multiple levels are considered, effects are often independent, sometimes are not direct, and frequently have complex relations to outcomes.

This body of research also has implications for intervention and prevention. The accumulated findings suggest that interventions that focus on individual or family factors without consideration of this important aspect of community context may have limited impact on outcome. The task faced by families living in urban communities are likely quite different than those faced by families living in other types of communities. Traditional interventions that focus on parenting practices such as discipline and monitoring may not be as effective with families living in the inner-city as has been found with families living in other settings. It is not that these characteristics of families are not important. Rather, the task for families living in the inner-city may be to maintain these characteristics in the face of stressors associated with living in an urban environment. The basic work for intervention and prevention efforts may be to help families learn to manage and cope with these stressors (Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 1997).

In addition, a focus only on increasing family functioning is not likely to be enough to mitigate risk as risk in these communities is not necessarily related to family functioning. Rather, programs and policies aimed at reducing the amount of stress experienced and building social support and communication among families living in the neighborhood may be more effective in changing behavior in these communities. Increased support and social organization within the neighborhood may provide support to families to help negotiate and manage the demands of community stressors.. Policies aimed at improving the quality of the neighborhood; those effecting the structural characteristics of the community such as the economic and social resources available, are likely to make the most significant changes for children and families in inner-city communities.

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