

APPLICATION OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION EXPLANATION TO GUN VIOLENCE IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

This research applied social disorganization theory (SDT) to examine the problem of gun violence in United States of America and found that the SDT, despite its inherent flaws as a criminological model, to varying degrees it is parsimonious, has scope and logically consistent. Additionally, this study found that the SDT can be tested against empirical evidence which ensure that it is scientific and therefore has useful policy implications. It is also a finding of this research paper that despite the fact that SDT is an appropriate theory to explain the problem of gun violence, no single theory can adequately explain the prevalence of gun violence and indeed other criminal behavior because of the diverse nature of etiology of criminal behavior such as gun violence. The study thus concludes that the society is moving away from the notion that people are born criminal and embracing the fact that one cannot tell who is a criminal by mere looking at the face.

INTRODUCTION

Gun violence in the United States of America is a major threat to the health and safety of all Americans. Every day in the United States, 93 people die from gunshot wounds (Miller & Cohen, 1997). According to a FBI (2006) report, gun violence is associated with majority of homicides and over half the suicides in the nation. The fatality rate is roughly equivalent to that associated with HIV infection that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recognized as an epidemic. In addition to the human suffering caused by these injuries and fatalities, gunshot wounds account for approximately \$40 billion in medical, public service, and work loss costs each year (U.S. Office of Analysis, Epidemiology, & Health, 1996). In short, gun violence is a significant criminal justice problem and a public health problem.

Concern about gun crime and violence is widespread, and according to Cook and Ludwig (2000), it affects the way many people live their lives, and it also accounts for perhaps 80 percent of the approximately \$100 billion in social costs that gun violence imposes on society. Scholars such as Logue (2008) have reached the conclusion that firearms continue to be a leading cause of violent deaths in American schools since 1992. In December 2008, a study prepared by mayors in the United States of America who are against illegal guns showed that lax gun laws in most of the states of the country contribute not only to illegal gun trafficking but also to higher homicide rates in the United States of America. The study analyzed trace data from guns used in connection with crimes during 2007. The data revealed a strong correlation between weak state gun laws and higher rates of in-state murders, police slayings, and sales of guns used in crime in other states.

There have been several important studies on the problem of guns violence in United States of America. Study after study found that a gun in the home is associated with an increased

risk of homicide and suicide. And while guns are more used to prevent some crimes, they are used far more often to commit crimes. Guns are used to kill, maim, rob, assault, threaten and intimidate far more often than they are used in self-defense. According to Bailey et al. (1997) as cited by Barkan (2009), the ready presence of a handgun in law abiding households greatly increases the chances that gun will be used against a victim by someone he or she know.

Chermak and McGarrell (2004) found that between 1984 and 1994, the homicide rate tripled in United States of America compared to the previous years and these increases were caused by gun use. In addition, it was noted that while gun violence is highly concentrated in the United States of America, the rates of gun violence are so high that even people who are relatively low risk by American standards are “at risk” by international standards. The study argues for a multi-agency coalition of criminal justice agencies, working with variety of community partners, and committed to employing a strategic problem-solving approach to addressing homicide and serious fire arms-related violence.

In analyzing the serious effects of gun violence, Cook and Ludwig (2000) argued that all of us, no matter where we reside or how we live, share the cost of gun violence. Whether waiting in line to pass through airport security or paying taxes for the protection of public officials; whether buying a transparent book bag for our children to meet school’s post-Columbine regulations or subsidizing an urban trauma center. Cook and Ludwig (2000) concludes that investment in prevention, avoidance, and harm reduction, both public and private, constitute a far greater share of the gun- violence burden than previously recognized. They employed extensive survey data to measure the subjective costs of living in a society where there is risk of being shot or losing a loved one or neighbor to gun fire and noted that additional research on the etiology of the problem are some of the actions that will help.

Considering the seriousness and the problems pose to the United States of America communities by gun violence, explaining this social problem, like other social problems and crimes has become the focus of criminologists and criminal justice scholars (Kraska, 2004). Attempts at explaining these criminal behaviors has led to the development of criminological theories to help in making sense of facts that we already know and can be tested against new fact (Akers & Sellers, 2009; p.1).

In the fields of criminology and criminal justice, the role of scientific theories is to make statements about the relationship between observable phenomena (Akers & Sellers, 2013; Bernard, Snipes, & Gerould, 2010: 4). Criminological theories as explained by Akers and Sellers (2013) are part of the larger social science enterprise to explain and understand human behavior and the society. Therefore, the role of criminology theories is to illuminate on the reason behind why people conform to or deviate from social and legal norms. Additionally, it has been noted that almost every policy or institutional action taken to reduce or solve crime in the society is based on some underlying theory or theories of crime causation. It is therefore, important to understand, comprehend and evaluate criminological theories that are relevant to explaining gun violence as a first step in gaining a better assessment of the problem and to also aid in policy to be targeted towards to reducing gun violence.

THEORIES OF CRIME CAUSATION

Crime is a feature of every human society and this explains why Durkheim (1897) contends that crime is functional to the existence of human society. The increasing complexity of

human society has exacerbated the dimension and forms of criminality leading to the need for crime control policies to be inextricably connected to efforts to understand the causes of crime. Criminologists and policy planners have speculated on the causes of crime and have organized observed facts about crime into complex theoretical models. According to Siegel and Senna (1997) a theory is a statement that explains the relationship between abstract concepts in a meaningful way. For example, if scientists observed that crime rates are usually higher in neighborhood with high unemployment rates, poor housing, and inadequate schools, they might theorize that environmental conditions influence criminal behavior. The theory therefore suggests that social conditions can exert a powerful influence on human behavior.

Many theories of crime causation have been propounded to contribute to the understanding of crime patterns. The central reason for the divergent theories is because crime is a very complex phenomenon and it cannot be adequately understood by the use of one theory that capture all shade of meanings (Akers & Sellers, 2009, 2013; Bernard, Snipe & Gerould; Kubrin, Stucky & Krohn, 2009). Therefore, looking at different types of crime ranging from violent crime, street crime and white-collar crime, it seems unlikely that a single theory will ever have the scope and power of all facets of illegal behavior (Akers & Sellers, 2009, 2013). Even the most elaborate attempts at a unified theory of crime failed due to the fact that the etiology of criminal behavior is diverse. Similar to the controversy about finding a single theory or crime causation is the fact that many criminologists have debated on the usefulness of divergent theories of criminality because it does not give any direction for crime prevention efforts. As a result scholars tend to ask the question on how best crime control should be designed. Some of the questions that are being asked regularly include whether programs at addressing crime need to be based on punishment or treatment, and whether energy should be directed at the school system, family, neighborhood, job creation, the criminal justice system, or all the stated institutions.

Lionel and Rawlins (2005) argued that those in support of the need for different criminal justice perspectives have pointed to the existence of various criminological theories as a reason to confirm their position. For example, the proponents of the classical theory of crime posit that to control and reduce crime there is need for punishment and deterrence. In contrast, sociological theories look at broader factors like weather, climate, and population composition and of course poverty and support the rehabilitation view of criminal justice. The premise of the sociological view of crime is that environment control and determine human behavior and as a result their relationship with significant others. Therefore, the sociological perspective argued that behavior can most likely be changed by improving the quality of the social environment. The radical view of justice is supported by social conflict theory and the main argument is that crime is a response to capitalism and its contradictions, and thus crime is seen as a radical response to the social conditions of the poor. The labeling theorists maintains that how people view reality depends on the messages in the situation they encountered, the subjective interpretation of this interaction and how they shape future behavior. The labeling theory supports the noninterventionist perspective and also argued that people commit delinquency or crime because they are labeled as such.

Biological and psychological theories are similar due to the fact that they put the blame of criminal behavior on the conditions inherent in human being that is amenable to treatment (for example, mental and physical condition). Therefore, it can thus be argued that both perspectives seems to justify a rehabilitation orientation of the criminal justice and also support a policy of incapacitation if the personal problem that causes crime is found to be immune to any form of known treatment. Biological theory states that people commit crimes

because of genetic, biochemical, or neurological deficiencies (Akers & Sellers, 2009, 2013; Bernard, Snipe & Gerould; Kubrin, Stucky & Krohn, 2009). Psychological theory states that people commit crimes because of personality imbalances developed early in childhood (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

Additionally, anomie theory argued that crime is as a result of the gap that exists between American dream's goal of economic success and opportunity to obtain the goal thus creating structural strain (Kubrin, Stucky & Krohn, 2009). The feminism theorists position is that crime cannot be understood without considering gender and that men usually use crime to exert control over women and to demonstrate masculinity while the general strain theory posit that crime occur as a result of the inability of some people to obtain success goals which predispose them to experience strain or pressure. Integrated theory which is also an important theory utilizes components from other theories to establish a new theory to explain criminality.

In sum, there is a close relationship between theoretical views of crime causation and the policies that have been devised to control antisocial activities. Keeping these issues in mind, criminologists have continued to develop data for understanding the nature of criminal activity. Whether the data can be used to reduce the incidence of crime depends on the resources that government and the society is willing to devote to the matter (Lionel & Rawlins, 2005).

THEORY EVALUATION

Akers and Sellers (2009) identified some factors that should be utilized to evaluate theories. These factors include the logical consistency, scope and parsimony; testability and empirical validity of such theory (p.5-6). With regards to logical consistency, scope and parsimony, it is the argument of Akers and Sellers (2009) that a sound and reliable theory need to have well defined concepts while its logical proposition should also be clearly stated. The scope has to do with the range of theory, whether it only accounts for a narrow range of crime or it covers a wide ranging criminal behavior. The parsimony relates to how it uses concepts to explain the causes of crime.

Theory testability is another method of evaluating a theory. According to Akers and Sellers (2009, 2013) a useful theory need to be tested against empirical evidence to ensure that it is scientific. In this sense, a good theory should be measurable because if they are not measurable they will become untestable. Similarly, it is equally the position of Akers and Sellers (2009; 2013) that a theory may not be testable because it's tautological, its proposition are untestable by being open-ended and contradictory and due to unmeasurability of its concepts. Another criterion regularly used to test a theory is through its empirical validity which explain whether or not a theory has been supported by research evidence, while usefulness and policy implications which refers to the ability of a particular theory to inform adequate social and criminal justice policy represent an important criterion that can equally be utilized to test a theory.

GUN VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

Research linking neighborhood disadvantage to the disproportionate representation of minorities in the justice system has been conducted from a macro-level, sociological perspective in which neighborhood characteristics are correlated with rates of neighborhood

violence (Peterson & Krivo, 2005; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). From this perspective, differences in the crime rates of black and white Americans are a result of varying levels of economic disadvantage (Sampson et al., 2005). The conclusion is that in United States of America, black Americans are more likely than their white counterparts to inhabit disadvantaged neighborhoods, which are characterized by high levels of unemployment, poverty and dependence on public assistance.

Peterson and Krivo (2005) noted that the racial gap in offending behaviors is further intensified because the typical African-American community, at an absolute level, has more disadvantages, such as poverty and single parent households, than most disadvantaged white communities. However, when levels of disadvantage are similar for the two groups, its impact on antisocial behavior appears to be equivalent across race (Krivo & Peterson, 1996; Peterson & Krivo, 2005). Together, this suggests that the higher representation of black Americans in the justice system is closely linked to environmental and socioeconomic factors.

A relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime, especially violent crime such as gun violence has also been found to exist at a micro-level, from a psychological perspective. Peeples and Loeber (1994) found that residing in underclass neighborhoods was significantly related to delinquent behavior for boys. Similarly, Silver, Mulvey, and Monahan (1999) demonstrated that neighborhood factors are predictive of future violence for psychiatric inpatients above and beyond individual level factors, such as socioeconomic status, history of arrests, substance abuse, and psychopathy.

According to Pridemore (2003), most criminologists and sociologists who study violence believe that examining group-level and community characteristics is vital to understanding the patterns and antecedents of homicide rates. Furthermore, in addition to the distribution of people and resources, group-level dynamics are also important in the study of violent encounters. For example, contextual analysis reveals that factors such as collective efficacy among community members can serve to mediate homicide rates in otherwise seriously deprived neighborhoods (Pridemore, 2003; Sampson et al., 1997).

However, Haynie, Silver and Teasdale (2006) argue that although ecological researchers consistently find high rates of crime and violence within socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods, there is little consensus as to why this pattern exists. In attempt to address why the pattern exists, Haynie, Silver and Teasdale (2006) utilized data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (n = 12,747) to examined three related research questions and found that across a wide range of neighborhoods, socioeconomic disadvantage is positively related to adolescent violence net of compositional and selection-based effects. Additionally, the study also found that neighborhood disadvantage is associated with exposure to violent peers, and peer exposure mediates part of the neighborhood disadvantage – violence association. Joining structural and cultural explanations for violence, the findings suggest that neighborhood disadvantage influences adolescent violence indirectly by increasing opportunities for youth to become involved in violent peer networks (Haynie, Silver & Teasdale, 2006).

Similarly, according to Haynie, Silver and Teasdale (2006), arrest, victimization and self-report data consistently show that violence is not randomly distributed in geographical space, but rather is concentrated in neighborhoods that have particular structural attributes, such as concentrated disadvantage and residential instability (Markowitz, 2003). Therefore, it is not

surprising that recent efforts to understand the causes of adolescent violence increasingly include the neighborhood as a key contextual variable (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002).

However, despite recognizing the multiple contexts that influence violent behavior such as gun violence, researchers have had a difficult time identifying the specific mechanisms through which neighborhood effects occur. This has led some to suggest that neighborhood effects are artifactual, reflecting either individual-level compositional effects or self-selection by parents into particular neighborhoods (Dietz, 2002; Haynie et al., 2006). Therefore, a challenge for ecological researchers has been to show that neighborhood structure affects violent behaviors net of compositional and selection factors, and to demonstrate that such effects operate through measurable mediating processes.

Recognizing this challenge, researchers working in the ecological tradition have extended Shaw and McKay's (1942) social disorganization model by proposing specific social processes that may intervene between neighborhood structure and violence. In particular, the role of social networks within neighborhoods has been emphasized as a key intervention mechanism. Drawing on Kasarda and Janowitz's (1974) systemic model of neighborhood organization, this elaboration of social disorganization theory conceptualizes neighborhoods as complex systems of friendship and kinship networks and associational ties rooted in families and ongoing socialization processes (Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Gun violence and indeed violent crime are neither equally likely in all societies nor randomly spread throughout a given country. Social disorganization theorists argue that violence is a pattern that exists within cities. Persistent high violence rates within a neighborhood are due in part to the cultural transmission of deviant/violent values (Vito, Maahs & Homes, 2007). Once crime becomes entrenched in a particular location, violence becomes a natural part of the cognitive landscape. Gun violence and other types of violent behaviors become a way of life, and a means to solving personal and life problems. This is exemplified in the study of Hochstetler and Copes (2008), which concludes that exposure to violence and criminal activities in one's neighborhood at a young age enables a rationalization of participation in criminal behavior, even when confronted with other viable alternatives. Similarly, Breetzke (2010) and Fox, Lane and Akers (2010) have also conducted studies to test and confirm the usefulness of the social disorganization theory as an explanation of criminal behavior.

This theory look at the ecological characteristics that gives room for high crime rates and indeed violent in the neighborhood/ society. The argument here is that there are factors that affect crime rates. Mostly early theories identified neighborhoods that were transient – where the social fabrics of the society were beginning to fall apart (Akers & Sellers, 2009). Essential services like education, health care and housing start to go down and people want to leave. Also the common source of control-religion, family and even social services agencies started to disorganize. Shaw and McKay are very influential in popularizing the theory through the argument that life in a transitional slum area is linked to an inclination to commit crime. Influenced by Burgess and Park, the conclusion was that deviance and conventional behavior values compete with each other side by side.

It is also part of the argument of the social disorganization theory which is often refers to as neighborhood theory that youth and indeed people from high poverty neighborhood are exposed to high crime rates and violence (Center for Disease Control, 1997). Considerable research have been devoted to examining the neighborhood (environment) that people live

and it is the conclusion from these studies that structurally disadvantaged neighborhood have high rates of violent crime such as gun violence. Also, psychologists have linked the exposure to violence to a number of developmental and psychological effects on youths brought about by the neighborhood that they reside.

It is important to note here that violent crime is neither equally likely in all societies nor randomly spread through a given country. Violence is a pattern within cities as argued by the social disorganization theorists. Persistent high neighborhood violent rates are due in part to the cultural transmission of deviant/ violent values (Vito et al, 2007). Once crime becomes entrenched in a particular location, violence becomes a natural part of the cognitive landscape. Violent becomes a way of life-a means to solve personal and life problems. This is exemplify by the argument of Hochstetler and Copes (2008) that exposure to violence behavior such as gun violence and criminal activities in one's neighborhood early and at a young age enable the condition that will rationalize participation in such violent behavior and other criminal behaviors even when confronted with other viable alternatives.

The most widely recognized theory in this area is Wolfgang and Ferraculi's subculture of violence theory (Vito et al, 2007). The argument here is that in some subcultures, norms and values evolve to support and legitimize the use of violence behavior such as gun violence. In these subcultures, for example, the normal response to disrespect becomes violence as opposed to peaceful and other alternatives. In this neighborhood, violence is not condemned and perpetrators of violence do not feel any guilt for their actions. In addition, the neighborhood is also characterized by high level of gun ownership and drug dealings while the songs and lyrics that glorify violence are widespread.

There is empirical support for the existence of violence-legitimizing norms among residence of impoverished inner city area, it is important to recognize, however, that such norms do not rise out of a vacuum. Rather, they are tied to the cultural isolation, extreme poverty and violence that exist in such neighborhood. According to Hochstetler and Copes (2008) the pervasiveness of violence in the "neighborhoods is reinforce by the understanding of brutal environments and its expectations, often gained in the lifelong experiences of street children".

Another factor that has also led to increase rate of gun violence and indeed crime in the poor neighborhoods is the illegal drug activities. Criminologists have argued that relationship exist between drug and gun violence (Vito et al, 2007; Hochstetler and Copes, 2008). The increase in gun violence in most urban cities in United States of America have been said to correspond with the popularity of heroin in the late 1960s and with cocaine (crack) in the mid-to late 1980s (Vito et al, 2007). Al Blumstein (as cited by Vito et al, 2007) argued that the increase in gun violence during the 1980s was highly attributed to two primary factors-the increased availability of handguns and the crack cocaine epidemic

Critics argue that social disorganization theory does not address basic motivations for people to commit crimes. The theory indicates that high crime rates are a normal result of weak, divided communities, rather than individual people with a predisposition towards crime. Theorist- Robert Merton made the case in the 1950s for a social theory that looked at why some people commit crimes and why others do not (basic motivations for people to commit crime), which social disorganization theory does not provide (Akers and Seller, 2004). Other criticisms are the inability to measure the neighborhood level and the fact that the theory is more of Chicago specific (not all cities grow rings).

It is important to note that the social disorganization theory remains a very strong theory at the present time, and the most important finding is that violence and indeed crime correspond to the structure of the neighborhood. When this happened it does not matter what racial groups populate it, what matter most is the class. To address the problem of the neighborhood that give rise to violence and crime, the theory propose treatment program, development, community action programs which will effect necessary changes in the life of the people of the neighborhood.

Particularly important to note here is that based on the explanation of social disorganization theory provided by Akers and Sellers (2009), social disorganization theory is an effective theory in explaining criminal behavior such as gun violence because it satisfy the five criteria used in evaluating theories, which demonstrate whether the theory makes sense in the simplest way of explaining crime and whether the theory is able to be tested to deliver true and valid results (p.5-8). The criteria which the social disorganization theory as discussed by Akers and Sellers satisfied are the following:

With regards to logical consistency, scope and parsimony, Akers and Sellers (2009) position is that a sound theory should have a well-defined concept with logically stated propositions. Social disorganization proposes that criminal behavior is caused by disorganized neighborhood and therefore it also explain that socially disorganized neighborhood is the cause of crime. Therefore, it can be stated that the theory makes sense and its assumptions are logically consistent. The second criteria is the scope and it can be stated that social disorganization scope accounts for a broader range of crime including but not limited to juvenile delinquency, violence, prostitution and gambling. Therefore, the theory is a useful tool that can be used in the analysis and understanding of criminal behavior such as gun violence. In terms of parsimony, Akers and Sellers (2013) argued that the theory is parsimonious because it uses many concepts to explain causes of crime. Additionally, it is parsimonious because the theory is simple and easy to comprehend as demonstrated by the theory itself.

The next criterion to evaluate social disorganization is with regards to the realm of testability. The existence of disorganization can be measured separately from the occurrence of crime and we can also observe what disorganized neighborhood is and how it causes crime. Similarly, as evidenced with the early studies of Shaw and McKay and as well as other studies that followed, it is clear that social disorganization theory is able to be tested and is not limited in its scientific value. The last criterion which has made the theory to be effective in its applicability is in its empirical validity. It is important to note that Shaw and McKay's study (as cited by Akers & Sellers, 2009, 2013) and supported by the Mustaine, Tewksbury, and Stengel (2006) study of registered sex offenders; Gardner and Brooks-Gunn (2009) study on adolescent exposure to community violence; and Kingston, Huizinga and Elliott (2009) research on test of social disorganization theory in high-risk urban neighborhood illustrate and support the validity of social disorganization theory.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

Social disorganization as a macro theory is still a very strong theory and the most important finding is that crime rate corresponds to the structure of neighborhood. When this happen, it does not matter what racial groups populate it, what matter most is the class. Additionally, social disorganization theory could be said to have useful public policy implications because its scope is very effective within the earlier stated criteria and also because as a theory, it's

useful in the real world. Equally important to note is that one of the most important argument of the theory is that communities that show signs and characteristics of disorganization should be assisted with programs that will enable it to be organized as a first step in reducing its level of crime (Bernard, Snipes & Gerould, 2009). Services should be offered to community residents, for example, the residents of a disorganized community should be aided in owning and maintaining homes. Also, recreation programs and other community organization programs which will bring about increase community involvement and participation should be established to prevent delinquent activity and indeed criminal activities such as gun violence (Akers & Sellers, 2009). There is also the need for community action agencies or programs to lobby to get involve and get more programs into the disorganized areas. This is because by improving neighborhoods and making them more appealing, social controls will be strengthened.

According to Akers and Sellers (2009) programs that could be derived from the social disorganization theory which are beneficial to the debate of reducing gun violence and other criminal activities in the society include programs such as the 1930s Chicago Area projects, 1950s Boston's Mid-City Project and the 1960's New York's Mobilization for Youth which were all designed with the aims of working with delinquent gangs, enhancement of economic opportunities and training programs for the young ones in attempt to reduce the level of their involvement in delinquent and criminal activities. Others programs relevant to the discussion of social disorganization theory with regards strengthening the neighborhoods include policies and programs to reduce the drug use and illicit drug trade. Additionally, many programs such as the Weeds and Seed program, construction of public housing projects, the passage of civil rights legislation and the expansion of social welfare programs were borne out from the recommendations of the social disorganization theory.

In an attempt at demonstrating the usefulness of the social disorganization theory in recent times, Mustaine, Tewksbury and Stengel (2006) used social disorganization theory as a guide to evaluate the characteristics of neighborhoods where registered sex offenders reside in an effort at determining whether registered sex offenders are likely to live in areas with greater social disorganization. However, from a different perspective, Rose and Clear (2006) study attempted to emphasize the important of the policies and programs that originate from the theory and this led to the argument that an overreliance on incarceration as a formal control may hinder the ability of some communities to foster other forms of control because they weaken family and community structures. At the ecological level, the side effects of policies intended to fight crime by controlling individual behavior may exacerbate the problems they are intended to address. Thus, these communities may experience more, not less, social disorganization. As a result, Rose and Clear (2006) recommended community action programs derives from the social disorganization theory.

Based on the different studies that have been carried out to confirm the usefulness of social disorganization theory, it is safe to state that the theory will continue to be influential in understanding criminal behavior especially with the linkage of factors such as poverty, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility on crime rates.

CONCLUSION

The current study has advance and extend social disorganization theory with regards to gun violence in urban neighborhoods. Additionally, as part of the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, this research study examine and explain the findings in light of the

integrated concepts, assumptions, and generalizations/ theoretical expectations of (a) the social disorganization theory and (b) the social learning theory, and the research findings associated with (c) disorganized neighborhoods, (d) the inability of the family to function as a positive social institution and role model, and (e) the role of the media in furthering violence in society.

It is important to state here that a critical analysis of relevant criminological theories and examination of different positions of the authors such as Akers and Sellers (2009) who have contributed to the applicability of the SDT to criminal behavior such as gun violence has further intensified the fact that it seems unlikely that a single theory will ever have the scope and power of all facets of illegal and criminal behavior. This study has found that even the most sophisticated attempts fail to account for the great variety of criminal behavior that exists. Similar to this controversy about finding a single theory or crime causation is the fact today in the year 2014, the society is moving away from the notion that people are born criminal and embracing the fact that one cannot tell who is a criminal by merely looking at him or her. The criminologists of today have produced much better theories on why people commit crime, one of which is the SDT. However, because there are so many different types of criminals today, it is impossible to place them all under one theory that is why there are relevant multiple theories.

It is therefore, the position of this study that despite the fact that SDT remains a viable theory in explaining gun violence behavior, it is important to note that theories in criminology are not independent and as a result they need to be used as interchangeably in research

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