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The Role of African-American Churches in Reducing Crime Among Black Youth

by Byron R. Johnson

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The Role of African-American Churches in Reducing Crime Among Black Youth

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In this paper I examine the hypothesis that the religious involvement of African-American youth significantly shields them from the deleterious effects of neighborhood disorder and decay on youth crime. This hypothesis is tested by examining the fifth wave of data from the National Youth Survey (NYS), focusing on black respondents given the historical as well as contemporary significance of the African-American church for black Americans. Results from a series of multivariate analyses indicate that: (1) the effects of neighborhood disorder on crime among black youth are partly mediated by an individual's religious involvement; and (2) involvement of African-American youth in religious institutions significantly buffers or interacts with the effects of neighborhood disorder on crime, and in particular, serious crime. Theoretical and methodological implications of the present findings are briefly discussed.

Correlates of Youth Crime

For decades social scientists have studied the effects of variables such as poverty, ethnic diversity, and residential mobility on crime among youth.[1] If the presence of such disadvantages were noteworthy of American big cities decades ago, they are more profoundly relevant in urban America today. Among the deleterious effects of these poverty stricken areas is the increasing inability of local communities to control themselves.[2] Predictably, dissipating community control tends to yield community disorder or a lack of social order and control in a community. Empirical research confirms common sense expectations that community disorder is causally related to youth crime.[3]

Delinquency research has confirmed for many years that risk factors such as poverty and structural disadvantage cause crime. More recently, however, scholars have also confirmed that "protective factors" have just the opposite effect–they help prevent rather than encourage deviant activity. Operating through institutions of informal social control such as the family and school,[4] protective factors tend to partly mediate or offset the harmful effects of community disorder.[5]

Though understudied by social scientists, it would seem that religious institutions such as churches, mosques, or synagogues are well suited to produce the relational networks of social and emotional support that help prevent at-risk youth from participating in negative behavioral outcomes such as crime.[6] To address this neglected area in the literature, I examine whether black youths' involvement in religious institutions mediates or buffers those individuals from the effects of neighborhood disorder.

The African-American Church: A Neglected Research Area

Scholars have documented that the African-American church has been an important agency of social control and organization among black Americans.[7] The African-American church provided one of the earliest and therefore most recognizable vehicles for black Americans to begin to develop networks of support and control.[8] Yet despite the historical importance of the African-American church as a unique and powerful social institution within the black community,[9] its potential influence for promoting pro-social behavior among black Americans has been largely ignored by criminologists.

According to the National Survey of Black Americans (1979-1980), Christianity is the predominant religion among black Americans 18 years of age or older.[10] Specifically, 89.3 percent of all black respondents (n = 2,096, not including 11 missing cases) interviewed one or two years before the present data were collected, reported that they were religiously affiliated. Almost all of those religious respondents (98.6 percent) viewed themselves to be "Christian" (i.e., 85.0 percent Protestant, 7.1 percent Catholic, and 6.5 percent non-traditional Christian). Given this highly skewed distribution of religious affiliation among black Americans, I use the terms "the church" and "church attendance" interchangeably with religious institution and religious service attendance in the remainder of this paper to highlight the predominant religion found among African Americans in this survey.[11]

Harvard University economist Richard Freeman is one of the few social scientists to have empirically examined the religiosity-delinquency relationship, focusing specifically on inner-city black male youth. Dr. Freeman concluded that churchgoing helped them escape from the world of poverty, drug use, and crime.[12] Colleagues and I have since replicated this study and reconfirmed the significant and independent effect of church attendance on reducing criminal activities among urban black male youth.[13] The work this paper is based on[14] took further the previous research (which focused only on Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia) by utilizing a national sample to examine: (1) whether church involvement diminishes the harmful effects of neighborhood decay, and (2) whether by such diminishment, black youth involvement in the church helps control criminal behavior. Before presenting the study hypotheses, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss and clarify the study's two key concepts—neighborhood disorder and religious involvement.

Neighborhood Disorder

Neighborhood disorder has been defined as the appearance of a lack of order and control in a neighborhood.[15] Order refers to a state of peace and safety where the law is generally observed, whereas control is an act of maintaining that order. Thus, neighborhood disorder becomes obvious to residents by visible signs of both social and physical breakdown.[16] Visible cues of social disorder, for example, include people hanging out, drinking, taking drugs, and creating a sense of danger on the streets. Recent research suggests that neighborhood disorder can best be measured based on the descriptions of the community by its own residents.[17]

Church Involvement

Church involvement refers to the extent to which an individual is involved in a religious institution and is thus integrated into a social network or a set of people linked by a variety of social relationships that are church-based. We know that social networks are important because they provide social as well as emotional support.[18] The current research, therefore, begins with the assumption that youth involvement in church activities is likely to be a vehicle for fostering the development of social networks that help to influence and thus constrain individual delinquent behavior and subsequently reduce criminal activities.[19] Further, if these church-based social networks "spill-over" into the community at-large, they have the potential to influence broader neighborhood networks, thereby reducing neighborhood disorder itself. Thus these religious networks have the capacity to mitigate social disorder by assisting community members in a variety of meaningful ways (e.g. building social and economic capital).

Study Hypotheses

In this paper I test a series of hypotheses that African-American youth frequently attending religious services are likely to be more constrained with respect to delinquent behavior.[20] The first hypothesis to be tested is that black youth who frequently attend religious services are less likely to engage in criminal activities than their less religiously involved peers. The second hypothesis to be tested is that black youth living in neighborhoods characterized by disorder (i.e., "bad" neighborhoods) are more likely to engage in criminal activities than their counterparts living in communities characterized by order (i.e., "good" neighborhoods).[21] This difference in the level of criminal activity is expected to be primarily due to differences in neighborhood control of youth behavior.

The third hypothesis to be tested is that the harmful effects of rundown neighborhoods on crime among black youth are reduced by an individual's religious involvement. Specifically, religious involvement is expected to significantly mediate and buffer at-risk youth from the harmful effects of neighborhood disorder in that religious involvement facilitates the development of bonds and social networks that are likely to dissuade individual youth from engaging in deviant acts. In methodological terms, and consistent with prior research, neighborhood disorder is expected to promote youth participation in crime, but that this deleterious effect will decrease when religious involvement is included in the analyses.

These hypotheses are tested in relation to crime in general among black youth, as well as discriminately between minor crimes and serious crimes in order to explore whether the hypothesized relationships vary according to the severity of the behavior. Variables for non-religious social control[22] and social learning[23] are included in the present model to control for sources of spuriousness.[24] These control variables include, more specifically, attachment to family, conventional attitudes, deviant peer associations, sex, age, social class, and two family background variables.

Methodology

The data to test these hypotheses come from the National Youth Survey (NYS), a longitudinal study of a national probability sample of 1,725 persons aged 11 to 17 originally surveyed in early 1977.[25] The present study analyzes the fifth wave of data collected in 1981 when the respondents were 15 through 21 years old. The decision to use wave 5 data is due to the fact that it is the only iteration of NYS survey data that included items measuring the two key concepts in this study—neighborhood disorder and religious involvement.

Neighborhood disorder was measured by items asking respondents to describe how problematic each of eight different situations (e.g., vandalism, abandoned houses, burglaries, and thefts) is in their neighborhood, using a 3-point Likert scale (1 = not a problem at all; 2 = somewhat of a problem; 3 = big problem).[26] A composite measure was constructed by calculating the mean score of each individual's responses to the eight items so that a higher score reflected a respondent's perception of more (and more severe) problems in the neighborhood.

Religious involvement was measured by an item asking respondents how often they attended church, mosque, synagogue, or other religious services during the previous year, with five response choices ranging from "never" (= 1) to "several times a week" (= 5). It is important to note that using a multidimensional measure is more comprehensive, and therefore preferred, to a single-item measure of religious involvement. Nonetheless, it is also worth noting that most previous research has demonstrated a significant inverse relationship between the frequency of attending religious services (as a measure of religious involvement) and deviance.[27] Indeed, an important recent study "confirms the efficacy of behavioral indicators of religiosity [usually attendance] so prevalent in prior research."[28] Though not a perfect measure, attendance is a reasonably valid indicator of religious involvement.[29]

Two variables from social bonding theory were included in the present model. First, *attachment* to family was measured by items inquiring about the dimensions of family involvement (i.e., the amount of time spent with family), as well as the quality of ties to the family (i.e., perceived closeness to the family and whether the family listens to or is not interested in the problems of the respondent).[30] These items were first summed for a total score on each dimension, and then the total scores were standardized and combined into a single composite variable measuring the strength of family attachment.

The second bonding variable, *conventional attitudes*, measured the degree to which youth hold beliefs in opposition to the commission of various deviant acts. A series of items was utilized asking respondents how wrong it would be for them, or someone of their age, to engage in each of six criminal activities. A mean score was calculated based on the high loadings of the six criminal activities (see Appendix A) and high inter-item reliability ($\alpha = .85$).

Finally, I control for *deviant peer association* as an important barometer of peer influence, which Akers' social learning theory emphasizes as critical in explaining delinquency.[31] Specifically, I combined five items that measure the proportion of a respondent's "close friends" who engage in each of five criminal acts.[32] The five items load on a single factor, with an inter-item reliability coefficient of .83 (see Appendix A). A composite measure of delinquent association was constructed by standardizing the total scores.

Measuring Crime

The National Youth Survey (NYS) was designed to illicit from respondents the entire range of self-reported norm-violating behaviors for which youth could be arrested.[33] The NYS measured youth crime using two response sets: (1) an open-ended frequency count and (2) a series of categories for all frequency responses of ten or higher. This study uses categorical responses rather than an incidence (i.e., frequency count) measure because the distribution of the former is less skewed. A total of 19 items relating to personal, property, and illegal service offenses are combined into a single scale of *general crime*. Specifically, the scale includes three "felony assault" items, three "minor assault" items, three "robbery" items, four "felony theft" items, three "minor theft" items, and three "illegal services" items.[34] The items of general crime are split into two subscales: *minor crime* (i.e., items of minor assault and minor theft) and *serious crime* (i.e., items of felony assault, robbery, felony theft, and illegal services).[35]

The theoretical model tested in this study includes five sociodemographic background variables identified by researchers as most relevant to the study of delinquency.[36] These include: *age*; *sex* (coded: 0 = female, 1 = male); *family class* (i.e., a composite measure of occupation and education for the head of the family); *family intactness* (coded: 0 = not living with both biological parents, 1 = living with both biological parents); and *family size* (the number of children or youth under 18 in the respondent's family at wave 1, ranging from 0 to 9 or more).

Results*

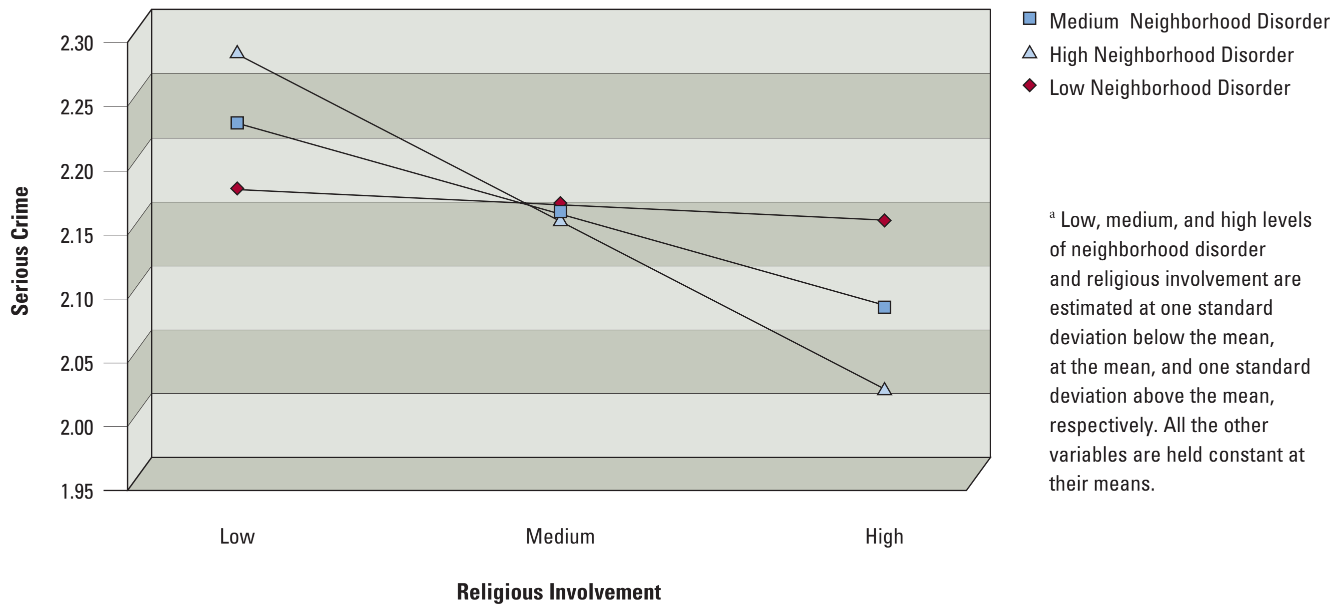
Table 1 shows that neighborhood disorder has significant positive (i.e. harmful) effects on general crime among black youth (Model 1). Supporting our hypothesis, however, is that neighborhood effects are reduced by 22.2 percent (in terms of the unstandardized coefficients) when religious involvement is inserted in Model 2. The constraining effect of religious involvement on general crime remains significant even though it decreases somewhat when controlling for social bonding and social learning variables (Model 3). This reduction supports the hypothesis that religious involvement has effects that cannot be completely explained by the non-religious variables included in the present analysis. The final model (Model 4) reveals that the hypothesis concerning the buffering effects of religious involvement fails to receive empirical support as the coefficient of the interaction term turns out to be non-significant ($p = .11$).

Results from analyzing the above regression model estimated separately for minor and serious crime are summarized in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The findings indicate the interaction between neighborhood disorder and religious involvement, which is non-significant for general crime, is negative and significant for the model of serious crime ($p = .06$), and non-significant for the model of minor crime ($p = .38$). This finding suggests that church attendance tends to buffer the effects of neighborhood disorder on serious crime among black youth: that is, the linkage between a disordered neighborhood and serious crime is not as great when black youth are actively involved in the church. The same cannot be said for minor crime.

The moderating effect of religious involvement on the propensity for black youth to commit serious crime is graphed in Figure 1 at the mean level of all other variables from Model 4 of Table 3. Low religious involvement is defined as one standard deviation below the mean; medium, at the mean; and high, one standard deviation

**Note: All tables and figures can be found in Appendix B, pages 14–16.*

Figure 1. **The Effects of Religious Involvement on Serious Crime at Low, Medium, and High Levels of Neighborhood Disorder** [a]



[a] Low, medium, and high levels of neighborhood disorder and religious involvement are estimated at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean, respectively. All the other variables are held constant at their means.

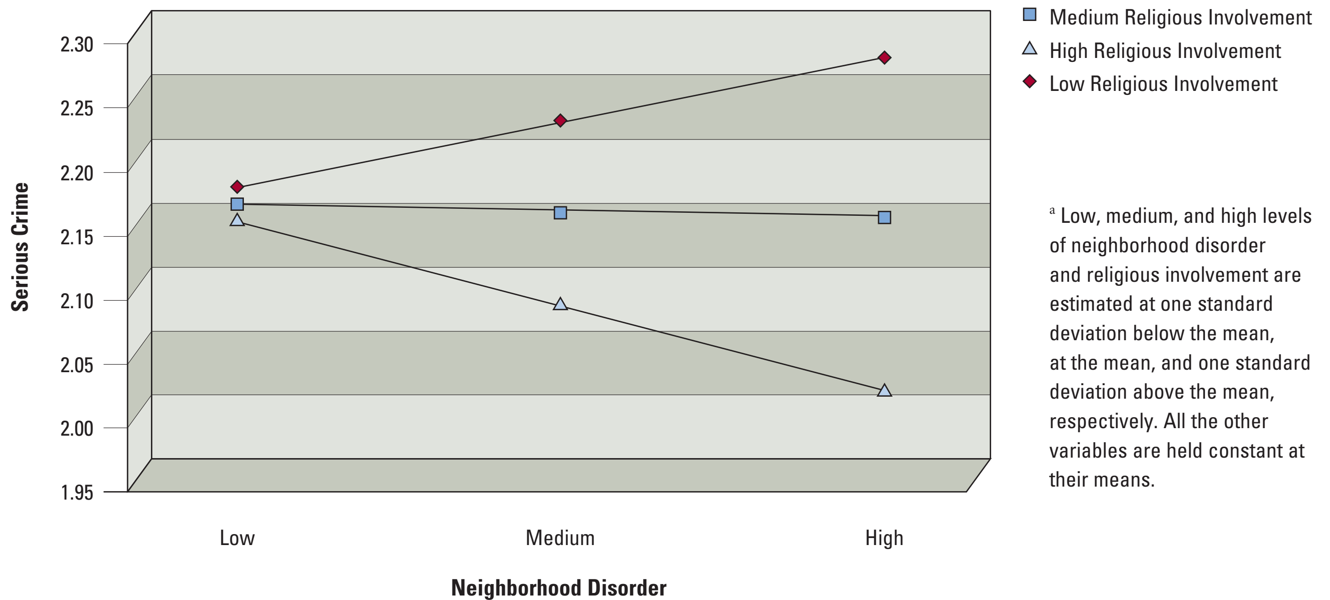
above the mean. As expected, the relationship between religious involvement and serious crime is inversely related: that is, the higher the religious involvement, the lower the level of serious crime. However, the size of the negative slope tends to increase as we move from the low (-.02) to medium (-.07) and then high (-.13) levels of neighborhood disorder, which means that the constraining effect of religious involvement on serious crime among black youth is more pronounced in those neighborhoods with higher levels of disorder than others.[37] The above relationship between neighborhood disorder and serious crime is shown in Figure 2.

As expected, for black youth with low religious involvement, the effect of neighborhood disorder on serious crime is positive (.05). That is, the predicted level of serious crime among black youths living in neighborhoods with high disorder is higher as compared to their counterparts living in neighborhoods with low disorder. Second, the disorder of the neighborhood tends to have little impact (-.01) on serious crime among black youth whose religious involvement is at medium level. Finally, an unexpected effect of high religious involvement on the relationship between neighborhood disorder and serious crime is observed for black youth. Specifically, the level of self-reported serious crime among black youth of high religious involvement living in a “bad” neighborhood tends to be lower than among their counterparts living in a “good” neighborhood.

Conclusion

Prior research on the effects of religion on youth behavior generally indicates the greater an individual’s religious involvement, the less likely that individual will be to participate in deviance and crime.[38] Research also demonstrates that youth living in rundown neighborhoods are more likely to engage in criminal activities than their peers living in neighborhoods characterized by lower levels of order, partly due to the lack of social control in these neighborhoods.[39] However, these two frequently studied research topics have rarely been jointly examined to test whether an individual’s religious involvement significantly buffers that individual from the harmful effects

Figure 2. **The Effects of Neighborhood Disorder on Serious Crime at Low, Medium, and High Levels of Religious Involvement** [a]



[a] Low, medium, and high levels of neighborhood disorder and religious involvement are estimated at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean, respectively. All the other variables are held constant at their means.

of neighborhood disorder on deviant youth behavior. The present study was intended to address this neglected research question by examining the potential role of the African-American church as an agency of local social control in protecting youth from the detrimental effects of neighborhood disorder.

First, the hypothesis about the constraining effects of church attendance on crime among black youth received empirical support, and the effects remain significant even after controlling for non-religious social bonding/learning variables as well as sociodemographic characteristics. Second, as expected, the effects of neighborhood disorder on increasing crime among black youth were found to be statistically significant. Third, the direct effects of neighborhood disorder initially observed were reduced when black youth's religious involvement was included in the model. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that an individual's religious involvement will weaken the detrimental effects of neighborhood disorder on youth behavior by partly mediating the neighborhood effects. The analyses also revealed that the findings discussed above relate to serious rather than minor forms of crime.

Finally, the hypothesis about the buffering effects of religious involvement on general crime among black youth failed to receive empirical support. However, when the buffering effects were explored separately, it was found that religious involvement significantly buffers individuals from the effects of neighborhood disorder with regard to serious crime, though not with regard to minor crime. Thus, the severity of the effects of neighborhood disorder on an individual's behavior depends on the level of that resident's religious involvement (i.e., the effect of neighborhood disorder decreases as an individual's religious involvement increases).

In fact, unexpectedly, the statistical relationship between the effects of neighborhood disorder and serious crime changed from positive to negative as the data moved from low to high levels of religious involvement. Specifically, for those who reported high levels of religious involvement, the average level of serious crime among those living in neighborhoods of high disorder is lower, instead of higher, than among those living in neighborhoods of low disorder. This unanticipated relationship may be due to the influence of what Stark calls a "moral community," namely "communities where the majority of people are actively religious."[40] Thus, it is possible that black youth who

are highly involved in churches located in "bad" neighborhoods of high disorder may still live in more "moral" communities than their counterparts living in "good" neighborhoods of low disorder.

The present findings have theoretical and methodological implications. First, the evidence that an individual's religious involvement significantly buffers youth from the criminogenic influence of neighborhood disorder suggests that researchers studying religious effects on youth behavior need to begin to better conceptualize religious involvement or religiosity as a protective factor as well as a variable of social control.

Second, the present study is based on conventional regression analysis of cross-sectional data drawn from a longitudinal national survey. If more appropriate data can be found, researchers can expand the methodological scope of the present study by utilizing multilevel modeling and life-course or a developmental approach to analyze panel data. Specifically, multilevel modeling approaches would be quite appropriate to analyze data collected separately for individual-level (e.g., religious involvement) and aggregate-level (e.g., neighborhood disorder or "moral community") variables. The use of panel data would enable researchers to examine whether the relationships found in the present study would developmentally vary across stages of adolescence and over the life-course.

Third, the present study suggests that future research concerning protective or resiliency factors for African-American youth may be short-sighted if the role of the church/religion in protecting black youth from delinquent behavior is overlooked. In the spirit of multidisciplinary and multifaceted approaches to various social problems, it would seem prudent to include the religious community in various partnership strategies to prevent crime. Though much more research is needed in this area, the current study provides initial evidence that the African-American church may play a key role as an agency of local social control in communities too often hampered by disorder and disadvantage.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that African-American churches should no longer be overlooked or "invisible institutions" among criminologists. Social scientists should begin conducting both qualitative and quantitative studies of the efficacy of these agencies of local social control. On the qualitative side, for example, ethnographic research is needed which explores the formation and intensity of social support networks within the African-American church. This research should also explore the potential linkages between churches and various beliefs regarding criminal behavior, as well as how to "morally" cope within high disorder communities. Further, we need to know more about which factors motivate church related workers, volunteers, and mentors to assist, mentor, and collaborate with youth, particularly at-risk youth, in addition to how and why these factors motivate in the first place. Finally, we need to conduct more quantitative analyses that facilitate a better understanding of the interaction between, as well as the direct and indirect effects of, religious involvement and other intervening and dependent variables that are traditionally studied in criminological research.

APPENDIX A.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables and Items Used for Analysis

Variables and Items	Mean W3	SD W4	n	Factor Loading	Reliability Coefficient (α)
Neighborhood Disorder	1.45	.52	226		.87
"Please tell me whether you think each is a problem in your neighborhood…" (1=not a problem at all; 2=somewhat of a problem; 3=big problem)					
1. Vandalism, buildings and personal belongings broken and torn up				.74	
2. Winos and junkies				.70	
3. Traffic				.44	
4. Abandoned houses				.68	
5. Sexual assaults or rapes				.78	
6. Burglaries and thefts				.77	
7. Run down and poorly kept buildings and yards				.70	
8. Assaults and muggings				.77	
Religious Involvement	2.85	1.35	226		
"During the past year, how often did you attend church, synagogue, or other religious services?" (1=never; 2=several times a year; 3=once or twice a month; 4=once a week; 5=several times a week)					
Attachment to Family	.14	1.52	226		
Family Involvement					.77
"On the average, how many ___ during the school week have you spent talking, working, or playing with your family?" (0 through 5)					
1. afternoons … from the end of school or work to dinner				.88	
2. evenings … from dinnertime to bedtime				.83	
"On the weekends, how much time have you generally spent talking, working, or playing with your family?"					
(1=very little; 2=not too much; 3=some; 4=quite a bit; 5=a great deal)				.49	
Affective Ties to Family					.71
"How much do you agree or disagree with (that) …?" (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree)					
1. I feel like an outsider with family*				.69	
2. My family is willing to listen if I have a problem				.62	
3. Sometimes I feel lonely when I'm with my family*				.32	
4. I feel close to my family				.75	
5. My family doesn't take much interest in my problems*				.54	
* reverse coded					

APPENDIX A. (CONTINUED)

Descriptive Statistics of Variables and Items Used for Analysis

Variables and Items	Mean W3	SD W4	n	Factor Loading	Reliability Coefficient (α)
Conventional Attitudes	3.34	.47	226		.85
"How wrong is it for you or someone of your age to …?" (1=not wrong at all; 2=a little bit wrong; 3=wrong; 4=very wrong)					
1. purposely damage or destroy property that does not belong to you				.63	
2. steal something worth less than $5				.67	
3. hit or threaten to hit someone without any reason				.67	
4. break into a vehicle or building to steal something				.78	
5. sell hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD				.59	
6. steal something worth more than $50				.82	
Deviant Peer Association	.04	1.09	219		.83
"During the last year how many of (your close friends) have …?" (1=none of them; 2=very few of them; 3=some of them; 4=most of them; 5=all of them)					
1. hit or threatened to hit someone without any reason				.64	
2. stolen something worth less than $5				.63	
3. stolen something worth more than $50				.76	
4. broken into vehicle or building to steal something				.81	
5. sold hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD				.66	
General Crime	3.24	.76	226		
"How (often) in the last year have you …?" (1=never; 2=once or twice a year; 3=once every 2-3 months; 4=once a month; 5=once every 2-3 weeks; 6=once a week; 7=two to three times a week; 8=once a day; 9=two to three times a day)					
Felony Assault					
1. attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting or killing him/her					
2. had (tried to have) sexual relations with someone against their will					
3. been involved in gang fights					
Minor Assault					
1. hit (or threatened to hit) a teacher other adult at school					
2. hit (or threatened to hit) one of your parents					
3. hit (or threatened to hit) other students					
Robbery					
1. used force (strong-arm methods) to get money or things from other students					
2. used force (strong-arm methods) to get money or things from a teacher or other adults at school					
3. used force (strong-arm methods) to get money or things from other people					
Felony Theft					
1. stolen (or tried to steal) a motor vehicle, such as a car or motorcycle					
2. stolen (or tried to steal) something worth more than $50					
3. broken into a building or vehicle (or tried to break in) to steal something or just to look around					
4. knowingly bought, sold or held stolen goods (or tried to do any of these things)					

APPENDIX A. (CONTINUED)

Descriptive Statistics of Variables and Items Used for Analysis

Variables and Items	Mean W3	SD W4	n	Factor Loading	Reliability Coefficient (α)
Minor Theft					
1. stolen (or tried to steal) things worth $5 or less					
2. stolen (or tried to steal) things worth between $5 and $50					
3. taken a vehicle for a ride (drive) without the owner's permission					
Illegal Services					
1. been paid for having sexual relations with someone					
2. sold marijuana or hashish ("pot," "grass," "hash")					
3. sold hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD					
Minor Crime	2.24	.63	226		
Minor Assault					
Minor Theft					
Serious Crime	2.14	.59	226		
Felony Assault					
Robbery					
Felony Theft					
Illegal Services					
Male	.58	.49	226		
Age	17.70	1.84	226		
Family Class (Hollingshead Composite)	53.34	14.51	216		
Family Intactness (Living with Both Biological Parents)	.23	.42	226		
Family Size (Number of Children at Home at Wave 1)	3.58	1.80	221		

APPENDIX B: TABLE 1.

Unstandardized and Standardized (in parentheses) Coefficients for OLS Regression of General Crime on Neighborhood Disorder, Religious Involvement, and Interaction (n = 207)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Neighborhood	.18**	.14*	.02	-.01
Disorder	(.12)	(.09)	(.01)	(-.01)
Religious		-.08**	-.06*	-.06*
Involvement		(-.14)	(-.11)	(-.10)
Disorder x Religious				-.08
Involvement				(-.08)
Male	.25**	.24**	.17*	.17*
	(.15)	(.15)	(.10)	(.10)
Age	.00	-.01	-.03	-.03
	(.01)	(-.02)	(-.07)	(-.06)
Age^2	-.03**	-.03*	-.02	-.02
	(-.13)	(-.11)	(-.08)	(-.08)
Family Class	-.00	-.00	-.00	-.00
	(-.03)	(-.03)	(-.07)	(-.07)
Family Intactness	-.04	-.01	.06	.06
	(-.02)	(-.01)	(.04)	(.03)
Family Size	.05*	.04*	.06**	.06**
at Wave 1	(.11)	(.10)	(.14)	(.14)
Attachment to			-.01	-.02
Family			(-.02)	(-.03)
Conventional			-.18*	-.19*
Attitudes			(-.09)	(-.10)
Deviant Peer			.26**	.26**
Association			(.36)	(.36)
Intercept	2.78	3.34	4.50	4.56
R^2	.068	.086	.220	.226
Increase in R^2		.018**	.134**	.006

* p<.10
** p<.05 (one-tailed test).

APPENDIX B: TABLE 2.

Unstandardized and Standardized (in parentheses) Coefficients for OLS Regression of Minor Crime on Neighborhood Disorder, Religious Involvement, and Interaction (*n* = 207)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Neighborhood	.05	.04	-.01	-.00
Disorder	(.04)	(.04)	(-.01)	(-.00)
Religious		-.02	-.00	-.00
Involvement		(-.03)	(-.00)	(-.00)
Disorder x Religious				.01
Involvement				(.02)
Male	.08	.08	.04	.04
	(.06)	(.06)	(.03)	(.03)
Age	-.03	-.03*	-.04*	-.04*
	(-.09)	(-.10)	(-.12)	(-.12)
Age^2	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01
	(-.07)	(-.06)	(-.04)	(-.04)
Family Class	-.00	-.00	-.01*	-.01*
	(-.07)	(-.07)	(-.10)	(-.10)
Family Intactness	-.01	-.00	.04	.04
	(-.01)	(-.00)	(.03)	(.03)
Family Size	.03	.03	.04*	.04*
at Wave 1	(.08)	(.07)	(.10)	(.10)
Attachment to			.01	.01
Family			(.03)	(.03)
Conventional			-.22*	-.22**
Attitudes			(-.14)	(-.14)
Deviant Peer			.12**	.12**
Association			(.20)	(.20)
Intercept	2.81	2.91	3.88	3.87
R^2	.032	.033	.091	.091
Increase in R^2		.001	.058**	.000

*p<.10
**p<.05 (one-tailed test).

APPENDIX B: TABLE 3.

Unstandardized and Standardized (in parentheses) Coefficients for OLS Regression of Serious Crime on Neighborhood Disorder, Religious Involvement, and Interaction (n = 207)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Neighborhood	.15**	.11*	.02	-.01
Disorder	(.12)	(.10)	(.01)	(-.01)
Religious		-.07**	-.06**	-.05**
Involvement		(-.16)	(-.13)	(-.12)
Disorder x Religious				-.08*
Involvement				(-.10)
Male	.20**	.20**	.14**	.14**
	(.16)	(.16)	(.11)	(.11)
Age	.02	.00	-.01	-.01
	(.05)	(.01)	(-.03)	(-.03)
Age^2	-.02**	-.02*	-.02*	-.02*
	(-.12)	(-.11)	(-.08)	(-.09)
Family Class	-.00	-.00	-.00	-.00
	(-.01)	(-.01)	(-.05)	(-.05)
Family Intactness	-.03	-.00	.05	.04
	(-.02)	(-.00)	(.03)	(.03)
Family Size	.03*	.03*	.04**	.04**
at Wave 1	(.10)	(.09)	(.12)	(.12)
Attachment to			-.01	-.02
Family			(-.03)	(-.05)
Conventional			-.08	-.09
Attitudes			(-.05)	(-.06)
Deviant Peer			.20**	.20**
Association			(.35)	(.35)
Intercept	1.52	2.00	2.69	2.75
R^2	.068	.091	.211	.221
Increase in R^2		.023**	.120**	.010

*p<.10
**p<.05 (one-tailed test). Appendix C

NOTES

[1] For a more detailed discussion see the classic study of C. R. Shaw and H. D. McKay, 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[2] R. R. Kornhauser, 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[3] See, for example, O. Simcha-Fagan and J. E. Schwartz, 1986. "Neighborhood and delinquency: An assessment of contextual effects." *Criminology* 24:667-703; and W. G. Skogan, 1990. *Disorder and Decline*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[4] See, for example, C. Smith, A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn, 1995. "Resilient youth: Identifying factors that prevent high-risk youth from engaging in delinquency and drug use." *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4:217-247.

[5] See, for example, D. S. Elliott, W. J. Wilson, D. Huizinga, R. J. Sampson, A. Elliott, and B. Rankin, 1996. "The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33:389-426; C. E. Ross, and S. J. Jang, 2000. "Neighborhood disorder, fear, and mistrust: The buffering role of social ties with neighbors." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28:401-420; and C. Smith, A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn, 1995. "Resilient youth: Identifying factors that prevent high-risk youth from engaging in delinquency and drug use." *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4:217-247.

[6] R. J. Bursik, Jr. and H. G. Grasmick, 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York, NY: Lexington Books.

[7] For more complete accounts of the historical significance of the African American church, consult any of the following references: W. E. B. DuBois, 1898. Some Efforts of the American Negroes for Their Own Betterment, in E. F. Frazier's, 1963. The *Negro Church in America*, p. 6. New York: Schocken Books; C. E. Lincoln, 1974. *The Black Experience in Religion*. New York: Anchor Books; C. E. Lincoln, and L. H. Mamiya, 1990. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press; I. R. Mukenge, I. R. 1983. *The Black Church in America: A Case Study in Political Economy*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc.; H. M. Nelsen, R. L. Yokley, and A. K. Nelsen, 1971. *The Black Church in America*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers; P. J. Paris, 1985. *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press; and J. R. Washington, Jr., 1964. *Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in the United States*. Boston: Beacon.

[8] W. E. B. DuBois, 1898. Some Efforts of the American Negroes for Their Own Betterment, in E. F. Frazier's, 1963. *The Negro Church in America*. New York: Schocken Books.

[9] A. Billingsley, 1994. "The social relevance of the contemporary black church." *National Journal of Sociology* 8:3 and R. J. Taylor, L. M. Chatters, R. Jayakody, and J. S. Levin, 1996. "Black and white differences in religious participation: A multisample comparison." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35(4):403-410.

[10] J. S. Jackson and G. Gurin, 1993. *National Survey of Black Americans, 1979-1980* [Computer file.] Conducted by University of Michigan, Survey Research Center. ICPSR ed. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-univerity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

[11] One caveat deals with our lack of information about the extent to which blacks attend African-American churches, that is, churches in which leadership and membership are predominantly black. However, we did not consider this lack of information as posing any serious problem to our study since we were interested in studying the effects of the church in general rather than that of the exclusively African-American church on black youth crime.

[12] Based on survey data collected from 2,358 young black males residing in the worst poverty tracts in Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia in 1979 to 1980.

[13] B. R. Johnson and D. B. Larson, 1998. *Religion: The Forgotten Faith Factor in Cutting Youth Crime and Saving At-Risk Urban Youth*, Center for Civic Innovation, Manhattan Institute, Jeremiah Project Report 98-2; and B. R. Johnson, D. B. Larson, S. D. Li, and S. J. Jang, 2000a. "Escaping from the crime of inner-cities: Church attendance and religious salience among disadvantaged youth." *Justice Quarterly* 17:377-391.

[14] The present study is based on a larger study by S. J. Jang and B. R. Johnson, 2000b. "The Invisible Institution and Urban Crime: The African-American Church as an Agency of Local Social Control," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29:479-498.

[15] For a more complete description and explanation of disorder see: W. G. Skogan, 1990. *Disorder and Decline*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[16] See also W. G. Skogan, 1986. Fear of crime and neighborhood change. Pp. 203-230 in A. J. Reiss and M. Tonry (Eds.) *Communities and Crime*. Chicago: University of Chicago; R. B. Taylor and M. Hale, 1986. "Testing alternative models of fear of crime." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 77:151-189; R. B. Taylor and S. A. Shumaker, 1990. "Local crime as a natural hazard: Implications for understanding the relationship between disorder and fear of crime." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 18:619-641.

[17] C. E. Ross, and S. J. Jang, 2000. "Neighborhood disorder, fear, and mistrust: The buffering role of social ties with neighbors." *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

[18] M. D. Krohn, 1986. "The web of conformity: A network approach to the explanation of delinquent behavior." *Social Problems* 33:S81-S93.

[19] M. R. Gottfredson, and T. Hirschi, 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; T. Hirschi, 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press; and M. D. Krohn, 1986. "The web of conformity: A network approach to the explanation of delinquent behavior." *Social Problems* 33:S81-S93.

[20] Individual religiosity produces conformity to social norms not only through an external control process via the sanction of socially-imposed embarrassment but also through an internal control process via the sanction of self-imposed shame (see H. G. Grasmick, E. Davenport, M. Chamlin, and R. J. Bursik, Jr. 1992. "Protestant fundamentalism and the retributive doctrine of punishment" *Criminology* 30:21-45).

[21] See, for example, D. S. Elliott, W. J. Wilson, D. Huizinga, R. J. Sampson, A. Elliott, and B. Rankin, 1996. "The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33:389-426.

[22] T. Hirschi, 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[23] R. L. Akers, 1985. *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*. 3rd Ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

[24] For related discussions of spuriousness see J. K. Cochran, P. B. Wood, and B. J. Arneklev, 1994. "Is the religiosity-delinquency relationship spurious? A test of arousal and social control theories." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 31:92-123; D. T. Evans, F. T. Cullen, R. G. Dunaway, and V. S. Burton, Jr. 1995. "Religion and crime reexamined: The impact of religion, secular controls, and social ecology on adult criminality." *Criminology* 33:195-217; and C. R. Tittle, and M. R. Welch, 1983. "Religiosity and deviance: Toward a contingency theory of constraining effects." *Social Forces* 61:653-682.

[25] The sample was obtained through a multistage cluster sampling of households in the continental United States. The seven birth cohorts in the sample and their parents were first interviewed in early 1977 about their attitudes at the time of the interview, and their behavior during the previous year. Of the total sample of 1,491 respondents interviewed at wave 5, 226 respondents (15.2 percent) identified their ethnicity as "Black." The average age of this ethnic group was 17.7 years old, which is very close to that of the total sample (i.e., 17.8 years old), while the black sample has a slightly higher percentage of male respondents (58.4 percent) than the total sample (i.e., 52.4 percent).

[26] Maximum likelihood exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis showed that all eight items loaded on a common factor with high loadings (i.e., at least 0.40 as a general rule) and have a high inter-item reliability coefficient of 0.87. See Appendix A for factor loadings and alpha coefficient as well as a more complete description of the items.

[27] B. R. Johnson, 1987. "Religiosity and institutional deviance: The impact of religious variables upon inmate adjustment." *Criminal Justice Review* 12:21-30; B. R. Johnson, D. B. Larson, S. D. Li, and M. McCullough, 2000b. "Religiosity and delinquency: A systematic review of the literature." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 16:32-52; and C. R. Tittle and M. R. Welch, 1983. "Religiosity and deviance: Toward a contingency theory of constraining effects." Social Forces 61:653-682.

[28] D. T. Evans, F. T. Cullen, R. G. Dunaway, and V. S. Burton, Jr. 1995. "Religion and crime reexamined: The impact of religion, secular controls, and social ecology on adult criminality." *Criminology* 33:210.

[29] R. L. Gorsuch, and S. McFarland, 1972. "Single vs. multiple-item scales for measuring religious values." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 11:53-64; and D. B. Larson, J. P. Swyers, and M. E. McCullough, 1998. *Scientific research on spirituality and health: A consensus report*. National Institute for Healthcare Research: Rockville, MD.

[30] The selected items of each dimension load on a common factor with high loadings with one exception and also had acceptable inter-item reliability coefficients of .77 and .71 (see Appendix A).

[31] M. Warr, 1993. "Age, peers, and delinquency." *Criminology* 31:17-40.

[32] As an alternative measure, the present study also examined what Elliott et al. (1985, p. 97) call "Involvement with Delinquent Peers Index" by jointly considering time spent with peers and their delinquent orientation. However, a preliminary analysis showed little difference in structural coefficients between this alternative and the present study's measure which has also been used in many previous studies examining delinquent peer influence.

[33] Although selling drugs is included in an omnibus measure of crime, the present study does not include drug use offenses since the etiology of this type of behavior tends to be different from that of non-drug offenses. For further justification see also R. Agnew and H. R. White, 1992. "An empirical test of general strain theory." *Criminology* 30:475-500; and D. S. Elliott, D. Huizinga, and S. Menard, 1989. *Multiple Problem Youth: Delinquency, Substance Use and Mental Health Problems*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

[34] D. S. Elliott, D. Huizinga, and S. Menard, 1989. *Multiple Problem Youth: Delinquency, Substance Use and Mental Health Problems*, pp. 12-13, Table 1.1. New York: Springer-Verlag. See Appendix A).

[35] We treat the "illegal services" items as measures of serious rather than minor crime because they include the items of selling illegal drugs.

[36] For example, see M. R. Gottfredson, and T. Hirschi, 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; T. Hirschi, 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press; R. Loeber, and M. Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986. Family factors as correlates and predictors of juvenile conduct problems and delinquency. In M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Vol. 7. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; R. J. Sampson, and J. H. Laub, 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; T. P. Thornberry, 1987. "Toward an interactional theory of delinquency." Criminology 25: 863-891; and J. Q. Wilson, and R. J. Herrnstein, 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

[37] For similar findings see C. R. Tittle and M. R. Welch, 1983. "Religiosity and deviance: Toward a contingency theory of constraining effects." *Social Forces* 61:653-682.

[38] B. R. Johnson, D. B. Larson, S. D. Li, and M. McCullough, 2000b. "Religiosity and delinquency: A systematic review of the literature." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 16:32-52; and C. R. Tittle and M. R. Welch, 1983. "Religiosity and deviance: Toward a contingency theory of constraining effects." *Social Forces* 61:653-682.

[39] See, for example, D. S. Elliott, W. J. Wilson, D. Huizinga, R. J. Sampson, A. Elliott, and B. Rankin, 1996. "The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33:389-426; O. Simcha-Fagan and J. E. Schwartz, J. E.,1986. "Neighborhood and delinquency: An assessment of contextual effects." *Criminology* 24:667-703.

[40] T. Hirschi, 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. pp. 165, emphasis in original. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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