INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE RESEARCH, IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS IN TECHNOLOGY

ISSN: 2454-132X
Impact Factor: 6.078
(Volume 11, Issue 5 - V11I5-1150)
Available online at: https://www.ijariit.com

A Study on the Dependence of Poverty on Crime: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role played by various elements of socioeconomic status - economic, social, and psychological - in causing criminal behaviour to materialise. Firstly, isolated neighbourhoods often face disconnection from employment in the legitimate economy and encounter income inequality. For the poor, especially, the widening of the gap between the rich and them demonstrates the contrast between earnings from criminal activities and legitimate avenues. These communities often become spatially isolated, causing social mechanisms like collective efficacy and informal social control to break down due to a lack of trust among neighbours. In fact, high-crime urban areas share more or less similar neighbourhood characteristics in Brazil (Nogueira de Melo et al. 2017), China (Liu et al. 2016), South Africa (Breetzke 2010), and the United States (Tuttle 5). Coupled with the economic and social features, various intervening processes like parental discipline, supervision, and attachment factors play an equal role in developing an individual's psyche. The need to appear "tough" to acquire status and to follow the "code of the streets" can create a mindset among people that can manifest into law-breaking activities. Through this paper, I shed light on the complexity involved in entering crime, and how it can sometimes equally be by circumstance, and not choice.

Keywords: *Poverty, Crime, Society, Status, Economics.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Why does a person get involved in crime? While crime often stems from an individual's lapse in judgment, research throughout the years offers a more intricate perspective. This paper examines the evolving relationship between socioeconomic status and involvement in illegal activities, substantiating that crimes are also committed due to the unfavourable circumstances in which one is born.

Since being brought into this world, most individuals have been fed the "American Dream" or a version of it. In fact, in his thesis, Merton (1938) argues that high crime rates in the United States are due to the conflict between an individual's goals - gaining monetary success and middle-class status- and the limited legitimate avenues available to him or her to achieve them. This absence creates the need to indulge in "innovative" and often deviant methods to redress these strains (Merton 1938 as quoted in Tuttle 3) (Fergusson et al. 956) (Agnew 152).

When the years of disadvantage on the shoulders of underprivileged individuals outweigh the rare licit opportunities they get to sustain themselves and their families, they are obliged to open a once-forbidden door. Yet, the challenge doesn't end there. Their connection to the legitimate economy is restricted, if not negligible (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Tuttle 8). In fact, former felons often face difficulty in acquiring employment, and the discrimination they face is unfortunately not inconspicuous but subtle (Wright).

Furthermore, these communities are often geographically isolated due to a direct relationship between the degree of economic inequality in a society and the level of spatial segregation in neighbourhoods by income. (Tuttle 6). The reason behind this is that "greater differences in income across individuals within society contribute to greater similarities of incomes among individuals living in neighbourhoods at the low and high-end of the income distribution" (Tuttle 6). The result of this social isolation is the decreasing likelihood of communities from engaging with "mainstream middle class institutions and normative codes" (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Lee et al. 109). When individuals get dissociated from middle-class networks, norms, and behaviours, and have spent their entire lives witnessing violence around them, they often tend to develop attitudes that justify its use. (Anderson 1999; Wilson 1996 as quoted in Markowitz 152). That being said, when an individual is exposed to various careers and opportunities, he or she is likely to believe in his or her capability of achieving them as well. In contrast, growing up with a lack of positive role models compels the same individual to consider his or her only options to be the ones in front of him or her (Wilson 1987; Anderson 1999 as quoted in Tuttle 8).

Further, according to the social control theory proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), socioeconomic inequality decreases informal social control, so people are less likely to intervene in preventing a crime from escalating further (Tuttle 9) (Fergusson et al. 957). For most, the action of not intervening is equivalent to protecting themselves from the same violence. Additionally, for those who have witnessed it as a response to social situations their whole lives, their ability to withstand it is much stronger compared to those who see it rarely (Lee et al. 112). Especially in economically disadvantaged communities, the perception of the legal system and the police is comparatively negative, even if these individuals have had no interaction with these institutions in the past (Tuttle 9).

To add fuel to the fire, many people who have served their time still face discrimination in their attempts to reintegrate into society. According to Wright, former felons have previously been excluded from more than 800 occupations because of laws and licensing rules. In addition, blanket hiring bans based on criminal records have had a disproportionate impact on Black and Latino workers. Many of these individuals are, thus, obliged to shift between formal and informal work, fueling a shadow economy that exploits them in the process (Wright).
The paradox of this situation is that society ends up perpetuating the very behaviour it condemns. In the struggle of earning their position in society, most previously incarcerated individuals instead end up returning to the norms and values they were raised with. While most face socioeconomic disadvantage, many others also encounter racial discrimination.

Unfortunately, the cycle of socioeconomic disadvantage is continuous yet dynamic, and the individuals who get sucked into it are helpless actors in its perpetuation. While it is true that it takes only one person to break the cycle, it is often more challenging for them to participate in conventional educational and labour market opportunities due to their vastly different cultural norms and values (Anderson, 1999; Wilson, 1996, as quoted in Markowitz, 152). In brief, as displayed by various studies, "inequality at the societal-level corresponds with concentrated disadvantage at the neighbourhood-level, contributing to reduced social integration and higher rates of homicide" (Tuttle 12). In other words, disparities in a society are associated with the concentration of individuals with similar economic status in different neighbourhoods, but within the same area. Such differences don't create a social milieu, and hence, homicide is an increased fallout.

The economic aspect of crime is often associated with poverty, wage inequality, family structure, level of education, cultural values, and other socioeconomic factors that predispose an individual to behave in a certain way (Buonanno). As discussed above, one of the primary reasons for this is that isolated neighbourhoods often don't get enough exposure to the legitimate economy (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Tuttle 9) and are compelled to seek illegitimate means in a society that is often market-driven. These "market societies" establish that higher economic returns form the driving principle of each individual's social life (Currie 1997 as quoted in Tuttle 10). In fact, several criminal organizations and gangs have not only been initiated, but have also sustained, to earn some form of income (Harrell & Peterson 1992 as quoted in Tuttle 9). Consistent with this explanation, violence is generally instrumental in these informal structures and underground markets, especially when "business deals" take place without any legal support (Goldstein, 1985; Martinez et al., 2008 as quoted in Tuttle 9) (Lee et al. 127). This further relates to the concept of "criminal choice," where it is believed that low income increases the tendency to commit crime because it also raises the cost of participating in legitimate activities. These include the cost of getting a good education or even the costs that go into getting a job. Unfortunately, most of these individuals have little trust in the possibility of a lawful and economically rich future, and can acquiesce to engaging in illegitimate means to earn income instead. In their opinion, the addition of a criminal record to their profile doesn't hamper their opportunities, because those opportunities were very few in the first place (Fleisher 1966 as quoted in Buonanno). Additionally, Becker (1993) built the first model of criminal choice, stating that most individuals weigh the utility they get from committing criminal activities against the utility obtained from devoting their time and resources to other activities (Buonanno). We can also consider the rational choice perspective when delving into this. Proposed by Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, this concept stresses the involvement in crime as a decision-making process bearing in mind the costs and benefits of the action (Tuttle 3). Nevertheless, an individual's attitude towards the use of coercion also plays an equally important role in some cases (Markowitz 146).

The rise in criminal behaviour, developed from Marxism and strain theory, can also be attributed to deindustrialization and the creation of an economy where the demand for skilled and highly educated workers has increased. Consequently, rates of unemployment have increased, and general economic deprivation has worsened (Carlson and Michalowski 1997; Grant and Martinez 1997; Shihadeh and Ousey 1998 as quoted in Lee et al. 110). Indeed, before the Industrial Revolution, individuals who weren't as skilled could still obtain jobs in manufacturing units. But with those possibilities becoming non-existent, the underground economy became more populous (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Lee et al. 126). Thus, we can say that unemployment does play a role in this equation, but only when its causes are structural, not frictional (Carlson and Michalowski 1997 as quoted in Lee et al. 111). Frictional unemployment is a natural process in any healthy economy, but structural unemployment suggests that there is a contradiction between the skills of individuals and the requirements of available jobs. In fact, results obtained by Imrohoroglu, Merlo and Rupert (2001) suggest that "about 79% of the people engaging in criminal activities are employed and only the remaining 21% are unemployed", a result which is also consistent with the data from the US in 1980 (Buonanno). And now, with the simultaneous expansion in the drug business, youth are at much greater risk of getting sucked into underground markets, especially because they respond the best to price incentives (Freeman 1991; Grogger 1998 as quoted in Buonanno). Most adolescents simply assume, perhaps even reluctantly, that they are in no position to get good employment later on in their lives, so they commit themselves to these illicit businesses from the very get-go.

This is why most criminals in US and European countries are aged between 14 to 25 (Grogger 1998; Freeman 1994 as quoted in Buonanno). Interestingly, according to a study conducted by Lee, Maune and Ousey, while there exists a positive relationship between poverty concentration and homicide in metropolitan counties, the results suggest otherwise for non-metropolitan counties.

When non-metropolitan poor are more likely to participate in the informal economy, licit activities like farming, fishing and repairing farming machinery are what they get involved in. In contrast, it is highly probable for the urban poor to engage in illegitimate activities where violence is inherent (Lee et al. 126). Isolated from the start, they are often paid low wages, and perhaps even exploited in their workplace (Burdett, Lagos and Wright 1999 as quoted in Buonanno).

Another factor in the economics of crime is income inequality. Income inequality is often considered to have a causal relationship with involvement in illegal activities, and is also responsible for the social factors that further contribute to it. In fact, since the 1970s, the United States has seen a substantial increase in wage inequality. (Piketty 2014 as quoted in Tuttle 6). It is believed that income inequality often causes "economically-motivated offences" as disadvantaged individuals tend to target the property of affluent members of society in the hopes of obtaining maximum economic returns. If income was distributed more equally among members of society, these offences would likely decrease. This is because those very individuals would dedicate time towards working in the labour market than targeting the property of those who earn the same income as them (Buonanno) (Kelly 2000 as quoted in Tuttle 3). Especially for the poor, a widening of the gap between the rich and them reflects a larger gap between earnings from criminal activities and legitimate opportunities. As the rich get richer, the incentive to commit theft will increase as the poor will be able to maximize their returns in a minimum period of time (Buonanno). Additionally, due to weakened purchasing power, those with limited financial resources can't afford to buy houses in more desirable neighbourhoods with quality schools and other facilities nearby. Consequently, these communities become more isolated from the others, and neighbourhoods get divided based on wealth and income (Tuttle 6). This result has been obtained in various countries including Sweden (Scarpa, 2015), Canada (Chen et al., 2012) and various European cities (Musterd et al. 2017) (Tuttle 6). That being said, if economic inequality is to decline, poverty concentration at neighbourhood level is also likely to decrease. However, it will still take time for the pre-existing norms and behaviour to adapt and evolve to mainstream society, criminal gangs to discontinue and informal economy to reduce in magnitude (Anderson 1999; Papachristos 2009; Papachristos et al. 2013 as quoted in Tuttle 11).

While reduction of income inequality is a macroeconomic solution and is essential to deter crime, it is also equally important to pay emphasis to those who were previously incarcerated and are now struggling for a second chance. One historical incident to ascertain this is the introduction of blanket bans on former felons, prohibiting them from entering a wide range of occupations from security guards to transportation jobs to any kind of work that would include children. Not only then, but even now, they struggle for basic economic security and are involved in "high-casualty, low-security ways of surviving" according to JoAnne Page, president and CEO of Fortune Society. For example, a drug conviction is likely to prevent you from obtaining federal student loans, grants or work study, further hindering your chances of connecting to the legitimate economy (Wright). The irony is that some individuals who get arrested for selling drugs, for example, end up spending most of their life in prison, another billion-dollar industry or they have to jump various hurdles to get a job, and if they don't, they have to return to the same business again (Thomas 169). So, while society believes in second chances, at least on paper, it unfortunately doesn't make the provisions for the same. In the process of preventing crime, one fails to realize that crime is deterred by taking care of everyone's basic needs. Thus, due to the positive relationship established between inequality, unemployment and crime, it is important that labour-market policies are able to reduce unemployment and inequality, because those may also discourage criminal activities. (Buonanno).

The relationship between cross-national inequality and homicide can also be attributed to how income inequality at societal level causes spatial segregation at the neighbourhood level (Reardon & Bischoff 2011 as quoted in Tuttle 2). As a result, there is a concentration of disadvantage in neighbourhoods, which weakens collective efficacy and other forms of social control (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson, 2012; Sampson & Wilson, 1995 as quoted in Tuttle 2). This fosters the increasing rate of homicide (Tuttle 2). The term "neighbourhood" has two distinct definitions: the "physical organisation of residential areas" and the networks and relationships connecting individuals together (Schwirian 1983 as quoted in Tuttle 5). The aftermath of segregating neighbourhoods by income- and subsequently isolating them from the rest of the world- can be broken down into two compartments. Firstly, this creates a "situation of company" in metropolitan areas specifically. Such individuals only communicate with those in close proximity to them, facilitating the creation of echo chambers because their distinct beliefs and norms are only being reinforced (Blau 1977 as quoted in Tuttle 6) (Crutchfield 1989 as quoted in Lee et al. 127). Moreover, this very income inequality reduces networks between people belonging to different economic status, so individuals are not introduced to diverse perspectives they could actually benefit from and social integration also suffers (Blau 1977 as quoted in Tuttle 7). As specified by Blau (1977, p. 43), "graduated parameter" signified by higher rates of economic inequality cause "concentrated graduated parameter" which increases associations between people within a given economic stratum (Tuttle 6). Secondly, social isolation also causes disengagement from mainstream institutions, codes and behaviours (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Lee et al. 109). Particularly, in the United States, the most low-income neighbourhoods are "largely segregated along racial lines, causing political connections and coalitions with other communities to be tenuous as well" (Massey & Denton 1993 as quoted in Tuttle 2). Another process to note is "capital disinvestment" which, according to Hagan (1994), again arises from residential segregation by income. Investors are less likely to provide capital in areas where they believe they will get low returns, and as a result, these communities face more trouble in connecting to middle-class foundations (Tuttle 7). Expectedly, these communities face difficulty in accumulating social capital and thus develop limited links to public levels of social control, as well as, other related mechanisms like social pressure (Bursik and Grasmick 1993 as quoted in Lee et al. 109). Their challenge in gaining social capital creates a ripple effect because youth are then deprived of positive role models. In fact, in recent decades, forms of socioeconomic disadvantage have made upward social mobility unattainable and illicit activities like drug use and violence prevalent in urban communities, thus creating severely disorganized "hyper-ghettos" (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Lee et al. 112).

This leads to the formation of subcultures and gangs which increases individual-level deprivation. When individual disadvantage amplifies, criminal motivation also escalates while social control takes an opposite turn.

Overall, neighbourhood characteristics of high crime urban areas are more or less similar in Brazil (Nogueira de Melo et al. 2017), China (Liu et al. 2016), South Africa (Breetzke 2010) and the United States (Tuttle 5). Moreover, criminal activity is likely to flourish in existing crime areas because the "social penalties for committing crime or the probability of arrest may be lower than in other neighbourhoods, as may be the costs of acquiring important "inputs" for crime" (Ludwig et. al 2000 as quoted in Buonanno). Since it is the livelihood of so many people residing in that area, if not the only means to feed their families and themselves, it is less likely to be condemned by neighbours.

Additionally, spatial segregation can often manifest into weakened social integration and perhaps eventually, social isolation as well (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson 2012; Wilson 1987; Massey & Denton 1993 as quoted in Tuttle 2). According to the system justification theory, advanced primarily by Jost and his colleagues, individuals often come to perceive their existing social status as legitimate despite the dire consequences those social arrangements may have on them individually and as a group (Jost & Banaji 1994 as quoted in Tuttle 4). Even if they wished to move up the ladder, upward social mobility is quite unattainable, leaving the disadvantaged even more spatially isolated from mainstream society (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Lee et al. 112). This further emphasizes horizontal inequality: the political, economic and social disparities between various cultural groups as seen in the housing discrimination (Roscigno et al. 2009) and self-segregation from certain minority groups (Blalock 1967; Emerson et al. 2001) in the United States (Stewart, 2001 as quoted in Tuttle 7). Additionally, spatial segregation reinforces economic disparities for cultural groups since they are excluded from educational and employment opportunities (Wilson 1987; Massey & Denton 1993; Stewart 2001 as quoted in Tuttle 7). Dominant cultural groups exert their influence politically on the docile by utilizing their wealth to purchase houses in desirable neighbourhoods, subsequently excluding the minority from their desired locations (Tuttle 7). It is also interesting to note that while disadvantaged neighbourhoods are not necessarily "disorganized" (Shaw & McKay 1942) due to close-knit relations within a homogeneous group (bonding social capital), there is a lack of trust and mutual obligation among diverse groups (Sampson 2012 as quoted in Tuttle 8). It is this weakened social integration which ultimately encourages deviant behaviour (Durkheim 1951, 1984 as quoted in Tuttle 8). In fact, Patillo's (1998) ethnographic study of a black lower middle-class Chicago neighbourhood concluded that dense social networks in these neighbourhoods are often overlapping, and thus provide a space for gang members and other criminals to co-exist in law-abiding networks (Markowitz 150).

Especially evident in urban settings, social isolation can reduce labour force attachment, decrease political participation and foster cultural beliefs where not conforming to conventional institutions isn't looked down upon (Shihadeh and Flynn 1996 as quoted in Lee et al. 112). Such a creation of new cultural capital perpetuates marginality but at the same time, members of that neighbourhood don't feel publicly ashamed of failure in these institutions. Consequently, informal social control mechanisms break down and so the likelihood of getting involved in crime also increases (Lee et al. 114). Apart from this, weakened social integration is also apparent in the difficulty faced by previously incarcerated individuals to rejoin society. For those who have drug-related felonies, even basic necessities like food stamps and welfare are denied. Rubbing salt in the wound, housing authorities can even reject a family's rental application or evict the family if a member has been convicted of one of several crimes. While families can appeal to a board and ask it to reconsider, this process is daunting enough (Wright). So, while the discrimination faced by these individuals may often be covert, they aren't completely invisible, and their impact on families is even more conspicuous.

A crucial aspect of this theme is collective efficacy and informal social control: two vital processes in the integration of people within a neighbourhood. As proposed by the social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942), the distribution of crime and delinquency depends on the capacity of a neighbourhood to hold its members back from violating norms. This capacity is considered a function of neighbourhood cohesion, represented by the "size, density, and breadth of network ties, and levels of organizational participation among residents" (Bursik 2000; Sampson Groves 1989 as quoted in Markowitz 149). Nowadays, however, one also stresses upon collective efficacy - the ability to not only intervene in problems in society, but also regulate them (Sampson & Raudenbush 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls 1997; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls 1999 as quoted in Markowitz 149). Further elaborated on by Emile Durkheim (1951[1897]), high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage hinder chances of establishing a normative consensus and prevent criminal behaviour (Bursik and Grasmick 1993) (Lee et al. 110). A study of 343 Chicago neighbourhoods shows how neighbourhood cohesion and collective efficacy help soften the impact of "concentrated disadvantage" - a factor which includes income, unemployment, family disruption, proportion of youth, and percent non-white (Sampson et al. 1997 as quoted in Markowitz 150). Additionally, the social control theory proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) displays that the inherent motivation to get involved in crime is restrained by social bonds. It also sheds light on how socioeconomic inequality reduces informal social control, thus increasing the likelihood of crime (Alarid, Burton, & Cullen 2000; Kawachi, Kennedy, & Wilkinson 1999; Kelly 2000; Kramer 2000; Sampson & Laub 1993; Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, & Jang 1991 as quoted in Fergusson et al. 957). When individuals share a sense of mutual trust and solidarity, they are more willing to intervene in case of any criminal incident (Sampson et al. 1997 as quoted in Tuttle 11). In contrast, weaker social networks within a neighbourhood may instead instill fear of reprimand or retaliation among neighbours, erasing any possibility of reporting the crime (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Markowitz 150). Thus, the combined effect of protecting oneself and absence of mutual trust among the neighbours are the root causes of weakened informal social control.

Wirth (1938) also states that dense population settlements often witness the shift from strong primary networks to weakened secondary networks, which aren't as effective in stabilizing support for individuals (Lee et al. 127). This is because as the number of diverse individuals and interactions with them increase, people may become less reliant on primary networks. This transition from relations with family and close friends to those with just short-lived acquaintances decreases the strength of social ties. Interestingly, this is perhaps why friendship has not been as endangered in rural settings as it has in urban areas. Therefore, the poor are able to work through their economic crises together by helping each other weather the storm (Wirth 1938 as quoted in Lee et al. 128).

To summarise, inequality at societal level often causes spatial segregation at neighbourhood level, separating these low-income individuals from mainstream institutions and normative codes. Additionally, informal social control, collective efficacy and neighbourhood cohesion break down, culturing an environment for crime to flourish. Thus, one's company deeply affects the future one will find oneself in.

But what about the attitude individuals develop towards violence? What must a person be thinking when they make the decision to get involved in crime? While emphasis has been placed on external factors from individuals' economic status to the associations they have, it is equally crucial to delve into individuals' psyche. As discussed before, one of the main motivations for crime is denoted by Merton's (1938) strain theory. According to strain theory, individuals who are fed the "American Dream" upon witnessing others with relatively more success, feel economically-based frustration and goal blockage (Kelly 2000 as quoted in Buonanno) (Tuttle 3). Unfortunately, the capacity of society to fulfill the aspirations of all these individuals is limited due to finite legitimate economic avenues. As a result, they act in innovative and often deviant ways to still achieve their goals (Tuttle 3). This can further be used to conclude that socioeconomic disadvantage can have disappointing effects on a person's psychological well-being, perhaps pre-disposing them to behave aggressively when encountering disputes (Williams and Flewelling 1988 as quoted in Lee et al. 110). In other words, coercion through violence is often accepted as the preferred method for solving disagreements (Tedeschi and Felson as quoted in Markowitz 147). Thus, if violence can be used to achieve your goals, then that person may start to believe that violence can inherently solve any issue they may be facing. Furthermore, witnessing and engaging in violence leads to an "oppositional culture" where these behaviours aren't condemned, but promoted. So, individuals are hindered from participating in conventional opportunities, feeding the cycle of disadvantage (Anderson 1999; Wilson 1996 as quoted in Markowitz 152). Another theory that sheds light on an individual's psychological state of mind is the differential association theory. This theory suggests the reason behind increased crime rates in disadvantaged backgrounds is due to greater exposure to criminal environment and peers who behave similarly (Sutherland 1947; Sutherland & Cressey 1955 as quoted in Fergusson et al. 956). This "peer effect" can negatively affect someone's way of thinking especially in youth because one is very susceptible to external influences at that age.

But do people practicing violence see it as a necessary means in place of economic blockages? And if so, what attitude do they develop which justify its use? According to Tedeschi and Felson, violent actions generally have three interrelated goals - to compel or deter the behaviour of others, to assert or protect "situated identities" and to address grievances (Markowitz 146). Elaborating more on the assertion of one's identity, Anderson argued that most among disadvantaged inner-city residents who get involved in violence wish to acquire status - either by appearing "tough" or through owning material possessions. These symbols strengthen their position in society, perhaps even aiding them in earning more respect in the neighbourhood. Thus, they are tempted to pick crime in the absence of conventional labour opportunities (Markowitz 148) (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Lee et al. 112-3). Especially to avoid victimization in crime-prone areas, individuals must demonstrate the willingness to use violence in case someone tries to cross them (Anderson 1999; Fagan et al. 2007 as quoted in Tuttle 9). But since everyone is ready to resort to violence, interpersonal violence escalates in these areas. And because one homicide can fuel personal vendettas, this violence begets violence (Papachristos 2009; Papachristos et al. 2013 as quoted in Tuttle 9). Another point to note is that because violence becomes so heavily accepted between individuals of relatively equal social standing in socially-isolated neighbourhoods (Gould 2003), economically marginalized men now start to compete by displaying their readiness to get involved in violence, in hopes of asserting their masculinity and attaining higher social status (Tuttle 10).

However, sometimes violence among individuals from the lower socioeconomic stratum is a form of "self-help" in the absence of formal authorities to settle disputes (Black 1983 as quoted in Markowitz 147). An equally important aspect to consider is the "code of streets" which governs the lifestyle in inner-city neighbourhoods. The code, often viewed as a coping mechanism to economic adversity and a means to acquire status in ghetto areas, highlights the importance of respecting others, being tough and resorting to physical violence if necessary (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Markowitz 148). Respecting others, however, condemns snitching on each other, reducing trust towards the police (Rosenfeld et al. 2003 as quoted in Tuttle 9). This, coupled with distrust towards mainstream institutions like the criminal justice system and "legal cynicism", ultimately creates an atmosphere where crime and violence are likely to flourish (Sampson & Bartusch 1998; Carr et al. 2007 as quoted in Tuttle 9). Perhaps they also believe that reporting to the authorities will not only alienate them from the rest, but will also be futile because their word might not be treated with the urgency it deserves. Therefore, a significant aspect of the relationship between disadvantage and involvement in crime is seen through attitudes towards violence including placing "greater emphasis on courage, retribution, the willingness to escalate negative events into disputes, and to use physical force to settle disputes" (Markowitz 152).

Circling back to the point of how youth is extremely vulnerable to their external environment, child rearing plays a prominent role in developing an individual's mindset and their version of 'right' and 'wrong.' According to the social learning perspective, variations in crime rates are a reflection of variations in early learning experiences which pre-dispose a child to form pro-violence opinions (Fergusson et al. 957). After all, parents will teach what they have learnt, which can often be 'unconventional' due to their own inaccessibility to proper education. Especially for young, unmarried, and less-educated parents, it is difficult to "effectively socialize children to adhere to conventional norms and to restrain their impulses" since the parents' ideologies are a result of the disadvantage itself (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990 as quoted in Markowitz 151). By the same token, disadvantaged youths are more likely to mirror the delinquent behaviour they observe in their neighbours and parents (Buonanno). Furthermore, the relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and involvement in crime is also supported by the approval of the use of violence (Heimer 1997 as quoted in Markowitz 148).

As observed in greatly disadvantaged communities of Philadelphia, when parents use corporal punishment with little provocation and even less explanation, children start to believe that violence is a means of asserting themselves (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Lee et al. 112) (Heimer and Matsueda 1994 as quoted in Markowitz 148). In their reanalysis of original Glueck data, Sampson and Laub (1993) state that linkages between socioeconomic disadvantage and crime arise through intervening processes like parental discipline, supervision and attachment factors coupled with intervening school and peer processes (Fergusson et al. 957). Thus, various intervening factors like early behavioural problems, peer associations, family adversity and difficulty in school lead to an accumulative process which substantiates the growth in crime rates (Fergusson et al. 963).

While a central part of getting involved in crime is an individual's convictions towards it, those very opinions and beliefs have been crystallized by the environment in which they were born and the people they spent their time with, not by choice but by circumstance. They have learnt that readiness to get involved in violence is equated to being tough, and in a society where upward mobility is near impossible, they are led to believe that use of violence can help them acquire more status in their neighbourhoods. But the irony is that the people who taught them grew up learning the same, highlighting the never-ending cycle of disadvantage. While they often wish they can reach out for help, it's easier said than done. Unspoken agreements and unfortunately, the fear of authorities not recognizing their problems drive the silence. They have no choice but to fulfill their goals differently, so that they can at least feed themselves and their families.

2. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interdependence of socioeconomic stature on crime focuses mainly on three aspects: economic, social and psychological. First proposed by Merton (1938), high crime rates in the United States are because of the contradiction between an individual's goals and the limited capacity of society to help them achieve the same. As a result, they are often compelled to engage in deviant methods to redress the strains (Merton 1938 as quoted in Tuttle 3) (Fergusson et al. 956). Elaborating on the restricted capacity of society, the legitimate economic avenues are much less for those belonging to disadvantaged neighbourhoods, especially since demand for highly skilled and educated workers has increased (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Tuttle 9). As a result, general economic deprivation has worsened (Carlson and Michalowski 1997; Grant and Martinez 1997; Shihadeh and Ousey 1998 as quoted in Lee et al. 110). Another very important economic cause for crime rates increasing is income inequality. Especially for the poor, a widening of the gap between the rich and them reflects a larger gap between earnings from criminal activities and legitimate opportunities (Buonanno).

To add fuel to the fire, these communities are often geographically isolated due to a direct relationship between the degree of economic inequality in a society and the level of spatial segregation in neighbourhoods by income (Tuttle 6). Thus, disadvantage gets concentrated in neighbourhoods, weakening collective efficacy and other forms of social control (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson 2012; Sampson & Wilson 1995 as quoted in Tuttle 2). Isolating disadvantaged neighbourhoods from others can have two primary effects: it creates a "situation of company" especially in metropolitan areas and as a result, people get more dissociated from middle-class networks and institutions (Crutchfield 1989 as quoted in Lee et al. 127) (Wilson 1987 as quoted in Lee et al. 109). As anticipated, these communities also face difficulty in accumulating social capital (Lee et al. 109). Overall, neighbourhood characteristics of high crime urban areas are more or less similar in Brazil (Nogueira de Melo et al. 2017), China (Liu et al. 2016), South Africa (Breetzke 2010) and the United States (Tuttle 5). Another reason why crime flourishes in these neighbourhoods is because the social penalties of committing crimes are much lower (Ludwig et. al 2000 as quoted in Buonanno). These communities also suffer weakened social integration due to lack of trust and mutual obligation among diverse groups in a neighbourhood (Sampson 2012 as quoted in Tuttle 8). Moreover, collective efficacy and informal social control - two very important social processes - are often on the short end of the stick in these cases. A study of 343 Chicago neighbourhoods shows how neighbourhood cohesion and collective efficacy help soften the impact of "concentrated disadvantage" (Sampson et al. 1997 as quoted in Markowitz 150).
Lastly, along with external factors like environment and economic circumstances, one must also delve into the psychological aspect. According to Tedeschi and Felson, violent actions generally have three interrelated goals - to compel or deter the behaviour of others, to assert or protect "situated identities" and to address grievances (Markowitz 146). Individuals in these areas often appear "tough" to acquire status or to simply avoid victimization (Anderson 1999; Fagan et al. 2007 as quoted in Tuttle 9) (Markowitz 148) (Anderson 1999 as quoted in Lee et al. 112-3). However, child rearing in such cases is equally important. In their reanalysis of original Glueck data, Sampson and Laub (1993) state that linkages between socioeconomic disadvantage and crime arise through intervening processes like parental discipline, supervision and attachment factors coupled with intervening school and peer processes (Fergusson et al. 957).

While this relationship has various facets and nuances to it, this paper has brought forward ideas mainly through data which is based from the United States. It puts emphasis more on the wider economic, social and psychological aspects of involvement in crime, however I would have liked to delve into how this relationship changes along the lines of race and gender as well. When diving into this relationship and how to deter crime, we must start from the grassroots. We must first focus on the youth of the present because they become the future of tomorrow. As aforementioned, most youth respond best to price incentives and they often struggle with a lack of positive role models around them. Further research perhaps has to be conducted on how youth can be empowered and inspired to pursue legitimate avenues, so that those who can become law-breakers, will now have an incentive not to. Furthermore, research can also be conducted on the effectiveness of current methods in reintegrating previously incarcerated individuals into society, and also how to effectively help those who have already gotten involved in crime. Ultimately, it is pivotal to understand that while most eventually end up behind bars, these very people have experienced imprisonment by the bounds of socioeconomic disadvantage, possibly their whole lives.

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