AN ELABORATION AND CRITIQUE OF "REASSESSING 'TOWARD A THEORY OF RACE, CRIME, AND URBAN INEQUALITY'"

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Abstract

In the prior article in this volume, Robert Sampson and colleagues (2018) take theoretical and empirical stock of a framework they presented twenty years ago. They find broad empirical support for its core tenets. Differences in disadvantage explain most, if not all, observed gaps in violent crime between Black and White neighborhoods; disadvantage also operates similarly to foster crime in Black and White areas. The authors also lament the limited research on the key intervening mechanism of community social organization, particularly its cultural and political sources, that links disadvantage to crime. I have two primary goals in commenting on this article. First, in keeping with their assessment, I provide my take on their agenda for extending the framework beyond the Black-White divide, giving greater attention to the political sources of community social organization, and considering reciprocal relationships between crime, race, and disadvantage. Second, I elaborate on how my views differ from Sampson and colleagues' regarding strategies to empirically validate the racial invariance thesis, the breadth of support for the thesis beyond its core tenets, and the role of culture. I provide these critiques to encourage further work exploring the explanatory power of Sampson and colleagues' thesis, and, to thereby foster a better understanding of enduring inequities in violent crime between racialized minority populations and Whites. Without their ecologically-based approach, we run the risk of essentializing minorities as criminogenic, like recent work espousing cultural (devoid of structural) and biological (devoid of social) explanations for the race-crime link.

Keywords: Community Social Organization, Ethnic and Racial Inequality, Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Crime, Racial Invariance Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

In "Reassessing 'Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality': Enduring and New Challenges in 21st Century America," Sampson and colleagues (2018, this issue) take stock of the theoretical and empirical status of the framework for understanding the link between race and crime that they articulated in Sampson and William J. Wilson (1995). In the 1995 paper, they urged scholars to take steps to provide a more thorough understanding of this relationship, with attention to how it is grounded in the structural conditions of groups' ecological settings. Their current reassessment reveals that scholars have responded to their call and that the core elements of their 1995 thesis enjoy broad support. Sampson and colleagues note that research since 1995 demonstrates that differences in disadvantage explain most if not all observed gaps in violent crime between Black and White neighborhoods, and disadvantage similarly fosters crime in both types of areas. Regarding the theoretical status of their approach, Sampson and colleagues lament that arguments about *why* structural disadvantage yields higher levels of crime are understudied. Therefore, they request further work on the intervening mechanism of community social organization, particularly its cultural and political sources. Their reassessment ends with questions to stimulate future research on race and crime, and with policy recommendations based on their theory. These proposals include undertaking efforts to break down the co-occurrence of the ecological concentration of disadvantage and residential segregation that currently characterize U.S. urban areas, and implementing a public sector jobs program.

The principal goals of my commentary are twofold. With a primary focus on neighborhood level processes, I explore further some of the key suggestions made by Sampson and colleagues. I agree with their emphasis on going beyond the Black-White divide in exploring the race-crime link, and accordingly discuss directions that I feel should be taken in doing so. The three ways are: 1) assessing the applicability of the racial invariance thesis to Latino neighborhoods; 2) considering the apparent protective influence of immigration; and 3) reflecting on the potential role of new types (i.e., colors) of neighborhoods. Further, building on Sampson and colleagues, I outline two key ways to bring in more centrally the role of political actors in shaping the race-crime link. Sampson and colleagues' current piece also highlights the possibility of feedback processes. In keeping with this theme, my discussion elaborates on the reciprocal relationship between crime and racial inequality that should be given consideration when exploring the race-crime relationship.

The second goal is to point to ways that my views depart somewhat from those of Sampson and colleagues. I argue that their theory should be studied by applying a quantitative conceptualization of differences by race and ethnicity. Doing so would allow for establishing more precise claims about invariance based on statistical equality, and for studying differences in predictors as a way to establish robust claims regarding racial invariance. Also, I may be less satisfied than Sampson and colleagues with the extent of empirical support for the racial invariance thesis, once extended beyond the theory's core tenets. Of particular concern is the state of knowledge regarding how culture helps to explain the patterning of crime across racial and ethnic neighborhoods. In all cases, these appraisals are offered as "friendly amendments" to the agenda set forth in the 2018 article. Overall, like the authors, I seek to underscore the merits of their theory, and establish more fully the strength of its applicability to the twenty-first century. Simply stated, Sampson and colleagues' theory, first articulated in 1995 and revisited here, is a central paradigm for understanding racial inequalities in crime.

BROADENING THE SCOPE OF THE RACIAL INVARIANCE THESIS

Sampson and colleagues (2018) appreciate that the urban landscape has changed since their original publication and note the importance of moving beyond the Black versus White dichotomy. I wholeheartedly agree. They see the surges in immigration during the 1990s and attendant revitalization as an opportunity to explore how their framework applies to "immigrants from Latin America," and review work on Latinos and their communities and on immigration and crime. Regarding Latino neighborhoods, I concur that an emerging body of work supports some of the core tenets of the racial invariance thesis. Ruth Peterson and Lauren Krivo (2010) document that accounting for inequality in neighborhood conditions, especially disadvantage and the presence of Whites nearby, explains the *entire* Latino-White gap. Moreover, a handful of studies demonstrate that disadvantage contributes to higher levels of crime in Latino neighborhoods (e.g., Hernandez et al., 2016; Peterson and Krivo, 2010). Thus, studies comparing Latino and White neighborhoods comport with Sampson and colleagues regarding disadvantage as an important explanation of gaps in crime between these two types of areas.

I depart from Sampson and colleagues in believing that the evidence is less conclusive about racial invariance for Latino areas when extended to factors beyond disadvantage. In particular, across a variety of factors such as home mortgage lending, residential instability, and collective efficacy, scholars uncover racially *variant* effects on violent crime. Both Alma Hernandez and colleagues (2016) and Darlene Saporu and colleagues (2011) find that the crime reducing benefits of residential loans are substantially greater for Latino neighborhoods than for White neighborhoods. Moreover, Hernandez and colleagues (2016) note that residential instability increases violent crime in White neighborhoods but has no influence in Latino areas. Keri Burchfield and Eric Silver (2013) find that collective efficacy operates to reduce robbery victimization risks in non-Latino neighborhoods in Los Angeles but has no effect in Latino areas. They also discover that collective efficacy is more weakly related to disadvantage in Latino than in non-Latino neighborhoods, and thus, mediates less of the effect of disadvantage on robbery victimization for Latino areas. The authors suggest that Latino neighborhoods are not as vulnerable to the pernicious influence of disadvantage as non-Latino neighborhoods because of their extensive forms of community social organization fueled by their vibrant public spaces. Future investigations should explore the inner-workings of Latino neighborhoods to get a better handle on why some factors like home mortgage lending are more effective in decreasing crime than in other neighborhood types, while other conditions like collective efficacy and residential stability do not operate as expected for Latino areas.[1]

Similarly, research on immigration's role within neighborhoods of distinct racial and ethnic compositions has yielded relatively tentative results to date. While inequality in levels of immigration helps explain racial and ethnic gaps in crime (Peterson and Krivo, 2010), the relationship between immigration and crime varies by the racial and ethnic composition of neighborhoods. For instance, Hernandez and colleagues (2016) find that percentage foreign born is associated with lower violence in White and Latino neighborhoods but has no significant effect in Black neighborhoods. Likewise, David Ramey (2013) demonstrates that immigration reduces violence for Latino neighborhoods, but loses its protective effect for White and Black neighborhoods in cities new to immigration. In brief, overall the literature on Latinos and crime, as well as immigration and crime, provide tentative support for the core tenets of the racial invariance thesis, but some efforts to broaden the thesis' scope beyond the Black-White divide are less conclusive.

An additional avenue for broadening research beyond the Black-White divide is to examine alternative neighborhood types that now comprise a relatively large share of areas in cities. Shifts in immigration over the past twenty years have resulted in more "minority" neighborhoods, places where most residents are Black or Latino but neither population is a majority. Likewise, there are now more "integrated" neighborhoods where Whites, Latinos, Asians, and Blacks live in roughly similar numbers (Logan and Zhang, 2010).

Such changes raise the question of how Sampson and colleagues' framework, which was developed to speak largely about the stark divide between Blacks and Whites, operates in this new urban geography. Preliminary work indicates that minority and integrated neighborhoods tend to fall between White and Black neighborhoods in terms of disadvantage, with integrated neighborhoods coming closer to approximating the conditions of White neighborhoods. The extant literature demonstrates that the lower levels of crime in White as compared to these new neighborhoods are due to their lower levels of disadvantage.

Yet, it is not clear *how* disadvantage operates in minority and integrated neighborhoods as compared to White areas. Both Peterson and Krivo (2010) and Hernandez and colleagues (2016) find that disadvantage increases violent crime for minority and integrated communities but the influence diminishes at high levels among integrated communities. Further, Hernandez et al. (2016) show that disadvantage has a stronger impact for White than integrated neighborhoods even after adjusting for restricted distributions. In sum, disadvantage seems to operate differently in White compared to these newer types of neighborhoods. It is unclear what this means theoretically. At face value, it suggests racial variance. However, this would be a premature conclusion because there are so few studies that have investigated this issue. Future work should unpack the structural and cultural milieu of these new neighborhood types. For instance, attention to aspects of inequality besides disadvantage such as spatial proximity to violence and cultural or political sources of community social organization may also shed light. Moreover, scholars engaged in this work should pay attention to the different historical and contemporary experiences of settlement, incorporation, inequality, and the like for these new groups, as they may not be analogous to the Black experience. Grounding our understanding of criminogenic processes within the unique historical and current contexts of these new groups aligns with arguments made by Sampson and Wilson (1995) and Sampson and colleagues (2018).

INVESTIGATING A REVERSE CAUSAL STORY: CRIME AS BOTH PREDICTOR AND OUTCOME

As noted above, Sampson and colleagues' (2018) framework situates the strong association between race and crime within historical processes—causal dynamics that unfold over time. Importantly, in the current article they return to Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay's (1942) idea that the interaction between the political economy and structural disadvantage produces "exceptional disadvantage in African American neighborhoods" (2018, p. tbd). Sampson and colleagues appreciate that the structural forces at play in producing criminal inequality are historically embedded in ways that likely include feedback processes that compound the relationships among race, disadvantage, and crime.

Here, I highlight one particular type of feedback that has received relatively little attention: that between crime and racial inequality. A small body of research shows that crime itself shapes various structural and other conditions related to the racial and

ethnic patterning of crime. Crime affects neighborhood population size and racial composition, leads to neighborhood deterioration, and breaks down social organization. Indeed, legacies of violence profoundly alter neighborhood criminogenic conditions.

Crime engenders population change and residential instability because it lessens home values and housing appreciation as well as prompting foreclosures, bank disinvestments, and dissatisfaction with the neighborhood (Immergluck and Smith, 2006; Skogan 1990). Such consequences from crime can play out differently by race. For instance, Jeffrey Morenoff and Sampson (1997) found that increases in homicide resulted in White population loss but Black population increase in Chicago neighborhoods from 1970 to 1990 (see also Hipp 2011). In this manner, crime rates can transform a neighborhood's racial/ethnic composition.

Relatedly, crime contributes to neighborhood deterioration. For instance, crime can increase disadvantage over time. Across thirteen cities, John Hipp (2010) finds that neighborhoods with high rates of violent crime experience significant increases in concentrated disadvantage. Further, crime, because it is often accompanied by its more visual corollaries of physical and social disorder, can make residents fearful of victimization and heighten a sense of perceived risk. In doing so, crime can thwart community social organization because it dissuades residents from intervening for the good of the community, making people unwilling to interact with neighbors or engage in informal surveillance (Bellair 2000). High crime areas also can increase cultural adaptations that make criminal behavior more likely (Anderson 1999; Rios 2011).

That crime can trigger neighborhood change that renders residents vulnerable to further crime has theoretical implications for the study of race and crime. It suggests that a theory of crime and urban racial inequality should consider how crime could increase and cement key ecological characteristics highlighted in the invariance framework. In turn, such ecological characteristics (e.g., disadvantage) lead to heightened exposure to crime. If so, crime itself can create a long-term vicious cycle of crime. This has clear consequences for understanding criminal inequality since crime is especially likely to be an enduring feature in Black neighborhoods, making them particularly vulnerable to this feedback process. Indeed, if a key aim is to understand the "divergent social worlds" (Peterson and Krivo, 2010) of Black versus White neighborhoods, our models must incorporate how longstanding concentrations of crime compound racial inequality in disadvantage. Without doing so, the framework is missing an important element to explain the race-crime link.

Recognizing reciprocal effects is one matter; accounting for them methodologically is another. One empirical dilemma in capturing this reciprocal relationship is finding comparable (socioeconomically speaking) neighborhoods of different colors to investigate. Identifying comparable neighborhoods of different colors is made more difficult because communities plagued by longstanding histories of crime are rarely majority White. In addition, because crime shapes the factors treated as exogenous, models must account for endogeneity. For instance, an apparently strong association between race and crime may be due to the influence of prior crime levels that have led to the intensification of factors like disadvantage, social isolation, and social disorganization. Ideally, scholars can employ longitudinal data to account for these interdependent processes. Such data, though rare, are increasingly available, at least for crime and macrostructural factors like poverty. For instance, in time the second wave of the National Neighborhood Crime Study will become publically available. Even without over time measures, statistical strategies such as controlling for prior crime or use of instrumental variables may help address the reciprocal nature of relationships related to structural disadvantage, race, and crime.

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HOW TO EVALUATE THE RACIAL INVARIANCE THESIS?

I now turn to a couple of issues where my assessments of future directions differ more substantially from Sampson and colleagues. An important aspect of any theory is how we should test it. In that vein, Sampson and colleagues contend that some criminologists have misinterpreted their argument that the sources of violent crime are the same for all groups to mean that the predictors of crime must be statistically equivalent in Black (as well as other minority) and White neighborhoods. They question this approach and instead advocate for a *qualitative* conceptualization of similarity in effects by race in which the predictors of crime need only operate in similar directions across different racial and ethnic groups or neighborhoods, that is, have a similar quality. Thus, the authors assert that to indicate racial invariance, factors like poverty should enhance crime in both Black and White neighborhoods; the magnitude of significant effects can differ.

    While I agree that effects of similar quality *suggest* racial invariance, I think that Sampson and colleagues' theory is better served by applying a quantitative conceptualization of differences by race and ethnicity. A quantitative approach allows for a more precise claim about invariance as it hinges on statistical equality, and provides an opportunity for differences to be detected and unpacked. These features should provide more meaningful information about the scope and conditions of the racial invariance thesis, and as such, offer a path for adjudicating the theory more precisely and definitively. As an example, Thomas McNulty (2001) statistically compares the influence of disadvantage on violent crime in Black and White neighborhoods. Like prior research, he uncovers that disadvantage has a positive impact on violent crime in both types of areas, showing a similar quality of influence. However, this impact is greater for White than Black communities. McNulty explores the source of this difference and finds that it is substantively important and due to the vastly "differing positions on the disadvantage distributions" for Black and White neighborhoods (p.481). By examining the variability in magnitude for disadvantage, McNulty was able to point out the divergent social worlds of Black and White neighborhoods, and to highlight an important methodological issue that if not tackled could undermine statistical inference and lead us to draw incorrect conclusions.

    If we go beyond specific tests of the racial invariance thesis to instead investigate the broader connections between race, ethnicity, and crime, it is clear that employing quantitative conceptualizations of differences by race helps to move the literature forward. Sampson and colleagues likely agree as they include some of this work in their discussion of explaining residual race effects. To illustrate, Christopher Lyons and colleagues (2013) find that the average relationship between immigration and crime is negative for a national sample of neighborhoods; however, the magnitude varies significantly such that the inverse relationship is strengthened in cities with favorable political conditions for immigrants. Had Lyons and colleagues (2013) only applied a qualitative conceptualization of racial and ethnic differences (similarity of direction of the overall [i.e., average] effect of race/ethnicity [immigration] on neighborhood crime), we would have been unable to see the heterogeneous effect of immigration on crime.

    Similarly, Maria Vélez and colleagues (2015) discover that while percent Black and violent crime are positively related on average, the slope varies significantly across cities, ranging from positive to negative. The authors use this information about differences in direction *and* magnitude to explore how Black political opportunities and mobilization at the city level moderate the percent Black-neighborhood violent crime relationship. They find that favorable political conditions for Blacks often nullify the

positive relationship between percent Black and violent crime, while unfavorable political conditions strengthen the positive relationship. This finding pushes scholars to theorize about the contexts under which percentage Black represents an empowering rather than criminogenic condition. In sum, I agree with Sampson and colleagues that quantitative conceptualizations of differences by race and ethnicity should be approached with caution because of statistical issues related to measurement error, and the like. However, I contend that such quantitative assessments provide a strategic vantage point to claim racial invariance based on statistical equivalency. As such, observed differences in magnitude are opportunities to explore additional elements of the structural and cultural milieu that pattern the race-crime link. In doing so, I am confident that we will provide a more precise and definitive validation of Sampson and colleagues' theory.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SOURCES OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL (DIS) ORGANIZATION

Sampson and colleagues (2018) note that much of the empirical evidence favoring the racial invariance thesis hinges on research about structural covariates, particularly disadvantage. There is significantly less attention to the intervening mechanism of community social organization, particularly its cultural and political sources. This is an important point; thus, here I provide suggestions about what researchers might do to better incorporate such explanations into their analyses.

Cognitive Landscapes

To bring cognitive landscapes more fully into explanations of the race-crime link, Sampson and colleagues highlight the importance of two cultural concepts: code of the street and legal cynicism. They review research on these factors and determine that the studies and findings are compelling. I agree that research on race and crime should pay greater attention to culture. However, I wish to push harder on the need for more analyses of how these constructs work since I do not find existing studies to be conclusive.

Regarding how the code of the street relates to criminal violence, only a handful of studies have examined variation *across* neighborhoods in this cultural domain or attempted to link the presence of such a code to neighborhood crime. For example, Ross Matsueda and colleagues (2006) find that disadvantaged, Black, and Latino neighborhoods have higher levels of a code of violence and that the code is associated with increased violent crime. However, they do not assess whether the code helps to explain the race-crime link in a multivariate model. Likewise, Sampson and Dawn Bartusch (1998) find that disadvantaged Black neighborhoods have higher levels of legal cynicism and police dissatisfaction, suggesting a connection to their higher levels of crime. Yet, how legal cynicism works to mediate the race-crime link is unclear. Indeed, Sampson and Bartusch document the spatial distribution of the attitudes in question but do not examine if such attitudes explain the race-crime link. Thus, while there are studies that suggest the *potential* for these cultural adaptations to affect race and ethnic crime patterns, none, to my knowledge, shows how they operate to explain the race-crime link.

While I am excited for future research to better incorporate the code of the street and legal cynicism into explanations of the race-crime link, our attention to culture must go beyond these two concepts. We need to identify and incorporate into models a much richer and fuller set of configurations that comprise the

multidimensional nature of culture. As I discuss below, cultural adaptations to disadvantaged environments are varied such that some are protective and can help keep crime lower than expected, while other responses support and reinforce criminal activity. Drawing on urban ethnographies and sociological discussions of culture, one can conceptualize culture as emerging from the interaction between knowledge production (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and actions) and rules on how to use that knowledge (Patterson 2014). Considering how residents think, feel, and act on their knowledge is a fruitful venue to explore how cultural processes round out structural explanations for the race-crime link. I find three studies particularly instructive in thinking about how cultural processes help make sense of race, disadvantage, and crime relationships. Victor Rios (2011) finds that young Black and Latino boys reported knowing, feeling, and understanding that agents of control, like the police, as well as nurturing agents, such as their parents, expected them to be "bad." In response to this criminalization, the youth engaged in crimes as a way to resist, defy, and protest against the system that criminalizes them. The short-term result is a feeling of empowerment and redress for the "humiliation, stigma and punishment that they encountered" (Rios 2011, p. 117). The long-term result often is a criminal record that ushers in further criminalization.

Waverly Duck (2015) discovers that residents have learned to negotiate and make sense of prevalent drug dealing partly by empathizing with those involved in the drug trade. He documents that residents in and out of the drug trade understand the reciprocity of this interactional code, and thus are able to get along peacefully. In fact, Duck argues that the sense of orderliness maintained by the interactional code is why he was able to explore this community so deeply, and implies that crime would be higher without it. Interactional codes can also engender a "lenient" attitude towards fellow residents who are in the drug dealing trade and create a reluctance to seek help from social institutions to counteract crime—especially the police. This finding pushes criminologists to understand how cultural adaptations can sometimes minimize crime as showcased by Duck, and sometimes support criminal activity like Elijah Anderson's (1999) research suggests. Also, Duck's work is important because its focus goes beyond cultural processes that take place solely in public spaces (which was Anderson's [1999] focus) helping to broaden the set of cultural interactions in poor Black neighborhoods that may shape crime.

Asking why there is not more violence given extreme levels of marginalization, Joseph Krupnick and Christopher Winship (2015) spotlight cultural expressions geared towards violence avoidance. Based on eighteen months of observation and in-depth interviews in a Chicago neighborhood, the authors find that most disadvantaged Black youths in their study seek to avoid violence by substituting it with the "front" of violence. This substitution allows residents to use verbal or nonverbal play while keeping their masculinity and respect. For instance, they uncover that when rival gang members pass each other on the street there are a series of nonverbal cues exchanged to avoid a verbal and physical confrontation. This work, along with Duck's (2015), suggests that residents of poor Black neighborhoods have adapted to widespread violence by creating cultural cues and rituals that help them avoid violence; they do not simply maintain cultural orientations that encourage crime. I think these findings also suggest an interesting idea for future work: some Black neighborhoods despite significant disadvantage may have lower than expected crime levels because of cultural adaptations aimed towards avoiding violence.

In brief, beyond legal cynicism and the code of the street, recent research suggests important ways that culture intervenes between disadvantage and crime. Culture is heterogeneous, both within and across disadvantaged neighborhoods. There are elements

of the cultural milieu that are protective and elements that are risky. Culture can be both an antecedent and a consequence of crime and criminalization processes. Space does not permit a thorough discussion of exactly how such cultural concepts would be conceptualized and operationalized for inclusion in models of neighborhood crime. Moreover, doing so is not my purpose in articulating these ideas. My point is to underscore Sampson and colleagues' observation that we must study how culture tethered tightly to structure shapes the race-crime link, and we must do so for familiar and new conceptualizations of this construct.

Political Economy

Sampson and colleagues (2018) appreciate that the political economy is relevant for the study of race and crime. However, they do not spell out how political processes can have racialized criminogenic effects. I find the concept of public social control to be useful for understanding the role of political processes. Public social control refers to the relationship between neighborhoods and private or governmental entities. These ties bring about policies or resources that can make or break a neighborhood (Vélez and Lyons, 2014). I spotlight a couple of private and public "actors" that are particularly relevant for the racial and ethnic patterning of crime.

First, decisions by banks such as whether to award home loans are fundamental to neighborhood wellbeing (Squires and Kubrin, 2006). Neighborhoods with significant infusions of bank funds are able to maintain housing values and encourage residential stability, and are well situated to guard against neighborhood decline. Banks also allocate risky products, like subprime lending, that can destabilize a community. As the Great Recession of 2007–2008 made clear, the fallout associated with foreclosures hurt neighborhoods and sent some on a spiral of decline (Baumer, et al., 2012; Owens and Sampson, 2013). Bank practices like these are relevant to the race-crime link because bank investments (both prime and subprime) are spatially patterned with dramatically fewer lending dollars and more subprime loans going to Black than White neighborhoods (Woodstock 2008, 2009). These inequalities in bank resources—those that build or dismantle communities—should be meaningful for explaining the race-crime link.

Second, agents of formal social control, particularly police, play a key role in the ability of a community to regulate crime. Neighborhoods that can forge effective ties with police can garner resources that help combat crime. Likewise, favorable relationships between police and communities can engender trust, confidence, and satisfaction with local police and other civic entities. As a result, residents are more likely to engage in a variety of civic actions that keep neighborhoods viable and vibrant with little disorder and crime. However, what happens when relationships with the police are unfavorable, even conflictual, or themselves involve victimization? Compared to White neighborhoods, residents of Black neighborhoods experience much less favorable interactions with the police (Weitzer and Tuch, 2006). The roots of this is excessive and often brutal policing that leaves residents feeling wary, fearful, and mistrustful (Brunson 2007). Moreover, high levels of police surveillance of disadvantaged minority communities translate into the removal of many residents from the community via arrest and incarceration. Together, these forces damage community social organization, by fostering lower levels of trust and a willingness to improve neighborhood conditions, which, in turn, heightens crime (Burch 2013; Clear et al., 2003). In sum, theoretically and empirically incorporating specific external actors like banks, the police, and the concrete ways that they affect crime into explanations of the race-crime link should be a top priority.

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CONCLUSION

Sampson and colleagues' framework, initially set forth in 1995 and reassessed in 2018, remains as relevant as ever. Despite important crime declines nationally, racial disparities persist and may be widening. Utilizing data for neighborhoods across eighteen cities from 1999 to 2013, Krivo and colleagues (2018) find that while most neighborhoods experienced drops in homicide and burglary, those that increased were most often predominantly Black and never White. Clearly, the national crime drop did not redistribute crime for Blacks and Whites. That crime remains a key feature of minority neighborhoods but not White areas points to the importance of incorporating crime itself as a feature of inequality because it fuels and feeds back into criminogenic conditions.

As Sampson and colleagues convincingly argue, we must continue to tackle head on the strong association between race and crime. This commentary encourages us to do so by: moving beyond the Black-White divide; taking seriously that long-standing crime inequalities that burden Blacks and other minorities compound and complicate the race-crime link; unpacking differences in the magnitude and direction of predictors; and, investigating the cultural and political sources of community social organization. Future work that does not ground analyses in the empirical reality of the divergent social worlds occupied by racial and ethnic minorities and Whites runs the risk of essentializing minorities as criminogenic, as evident in recent work that espouses cultural (devoid of structural) and even biological (devoid of social) explanations for the race-crime link.

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NOTE

1. While not developed here, future scholarship on Latinos and crime should take more seriously the tremendous heterogeneity among Latino groups in terms of national origin.

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