Areas Susceptible to Violent Crime: A Social Learning Perspective

Presentation notes

Violent Crime in America:

The presence of violent crime in the United States has fluctuated over time, but recent increases in 2014-16 have drawn attention to the issue. Such attention and concern can be directed toward certain major cities which have the highest rates of violent crime according to 2018’s Uniform Crime Report. Such cities include Detroit, Memphis, Baltimore and St. Louis which made up the top four violence ratings in 2018. These areas also have higher homicide rates in a national average of per 100,000 people. This discrepancy is not a simple one-time occurrence. Instead, these cities and others like them have prolonged violence occurrences and national averages.

Visualization of the Data:

This is the data chart for the 2018 Uniform Crime Report. Provides a simplistic breakdown of specific violent crime offenses and the approximated populations of such areas. Such cities are also categorized by the overall number of occurrences and the highlighted offense.

Trends in Occurrences:

In the occurrences and the reporting of violent crimes there are some trends which have begun to develop when identifying areas of greater risk. This is seen in the increase of violent crime in areas with populations of 300,000-700,000. Areas with such population shae been seen to have higher percentages of increased violent crime hen compared to areas which have either higher or lower estimated populations. These occurrences are verified in the presentence of the data provided by the National Crime Victim Survey and support the data by the Uniform Crime Report.

Urban v. Suburban (1):

In the identifying of what type of neighborhoods are more susceptible to higher violent crime rates there is the evaluation of urbanized v. suburban neighborhoods. There are increased differentiations between urban or suburban neighborhoods in regard to levels of crime and especially violent crime. Urbanized areas have provided an increased amount of sexual assaults when compared to suburban neighborhoods. 55% of reported sexual assaults happened within urban areas where only 35% fell in suburban areas. 2016 reports also indicated that urbanized areas consisted of a 6.6% increase in violent crime compared to the previous year. Suburban neighborhoods only increased 3.3% accounting for half of what urban areas increased.
Urban v. Suburban (2):

In the specific evaluation of homicide, urban areas had a rate of 4.7 which is above the national average of 3.9. There is also the understanding that urban areas with populations above 250,000 people are at much greater risk of violent activity taking place and being victimized of violent crime than suburban neighborhoods. Following the trend of violent crime as a whole, the presence of homicide leans heavily toward urban areas and is substantially at greater risk of occurrence than suburban neighborhoods. Collectively, the type of neighborhood can provide some explanation for the phenomenon of violent crime but other factors need to be addressed narrow down the causation.

Socioeconomic Differentiations:

To provide greater understanding of why urbanized areas are more susceptible, there is the evaluation of socioeconomic differentiations from other areas which may illustrate why specific urban areas continuously have higher violent crime rates. Urbanized areas have less potential to have access and secure resources such as employment and economic stability than other areas. There is also the increase in economic inequality in such areas. Following the recession of 2008, the industrial restructuring of societies and businesses left many in the urbanized areas to be unemployed. Often urban residents are unable to find employment in their areas considering that many suburban residences commute to these urban areas for employment and have greater opportunity to secure jobs than urbanized residents.

Socioeconomic Discrepancies:

According to Harvey Zorbaugh, Concepts regarding urbanized growth when compounded with socioeconomic differences of those within metro communities will result in social break down resulting in more crime. There is also the presence of a “concentration effect” when unemployment and poverty are clustered together within a given area. This concentration effect weakens bonds of ties to family and institutions which undermines the both formal and informal controlling factors which determine behavior. Disproportional to others who are incarcerated, young male minorities in these areas are the most common perpetrators.

Continued:

The deprivation of economic or financial stability has been seen to create an increase in intra-racial homicides. There is an increase in violent crime susceptibility to those who reside within lower income communities. Such increased susceptibility also translates to the likelihood of violent crime exposure to children, thus, influencing future behaviors. Such behaviors are seen in greater likelihoods of aggression and violence compared to others who had not been exposed to violent crime in their childhood development. There is often the continuation of these behaviors into adulthood.

Effects of Cultural Interactions:

The cultural norms and values of residence within high crime communities often have distrust toward economic stability and governmental interactions. This creates the development
of cultural lack of faith in the economic system leaving a breakdown in bonds toward economic institutions. The influence of cultural interactions can be translated to violent crime and what specific crimes take place in given areas. This can be seen in the city of Detroit which has a rape occurrence rating of 147.1. Compared to Baltimore, (a city with similar overall violence ratings) only has the rape rating of 59.6, nearly a third of the occurrences. Inversely, Baltimore has a homicide rating of 51 when compared to Detroit’s 38.9. This gives reason to believe that the exposure to certain violent behaviors influences the likelihood of continuation or imitation of the same behavior across generations. This is what causes such cities to continuously fall under the highest violent crime ratings.

Integration of Social Learning:

In Ronald Akers’ Social learning there is the importance of 4 major influences which make up the social learning of an individual. This is the differential associations, or interactions with others. Definitions which are the meanings toward actions which are conceptualized, this is the knowledge or identifying of whether actions are acceptable or not. The Differential reinforcements, or goals and outcomes of an action and determine whether pleasure or pain is a result of such actions. Finally, imitations are the simple imitating of behavior. Such a theory applies to the concept of violent crime and these areas of higher susceptibility by providing an understanding of the continuation of violent crime throughout the years in these areas.

Within these urbanized areas there is the presence of exposure to violent crime leading to interactions with individuals who engage in this behavior (Differential Associations)

The development of similar ideologies in regard to this criminal behavior have been seen in those incarcerated who have resided within these areas (Definitions)

Often goals of violent crime in these areas consist of sex, respect and the ability to achieve wealth have been present form adolescence (Differential Reinforcements)

Exposure to crime allows opportunity to imitate violence. Higher exposure or opportunity to imitate increase likelihood (Imitation)

Combatting the Issue:

Given the undisputed presence of violent crime in America, there is the need to address the situation all together. It has been seen that the targeting of at-risk areas such as the cities described is the most efficient way to drop the national average of violent crime and cause violent behavior to desist. A way of achieving this can be seen in the presence of intervention programs for those who are at-risk youth, specifically, young minority males. In 1996, a study regarding the behavioral programs in Boston caused homicide rates within the area to drop 15-35% annually. Another program by the name of “Becoming Men” in Chicago resulted in a 45% decrease of youths being arrested for violent crimes. In furtherance of these programs the presence of hot spot policing provides the opportunity for individuals to have reduced exposure to violent crime and provides more formal control to be present in high-risk areas.
Short Comings:

The areas of concern which have been described thus far of ten have little to no supplementary income to fund these types of programs. Funding goes toward other necessities which the city may need to pay for such as infrastructure and do not have enough left over to pay for these types of programs. This leaves many of these programs as expendable and can no longer be present within these communities. The overall lack of intervention diminishes the opportunity for violent behavior to desist, thus causing a continuance which has been seeing for years in these cities.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the overall trends regarding violent crime in America have great significance in attempting to cause such crime desist. When looking at factors such as types of neighborhoods, socioeconomic discrepancies and the influence of social interactions there can be a greater opportunity for efficiency in addressing the issue. The overall social interactions and learning which takes place within these areas provides a reasoning as to why annually the same cities and areas have the highest violence ratings. In addition, there needs to be the integration of policies which do not only increase the policing of the issue, but also provide intervention to allow these behaviors to be corrected.

Thank you for finding interest in my research and my application of concepts regarding the discrepancies of violent crime in America.