



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAW REVIEW

An International Open Access Double Blind Peer Reviewed, Referred Journal

Volume 4 | Issue 3 | 2025

Art. 09

**Youth Deviance in Urban Landscapes:
Integrating Classical Insights of the
Chicago School with Modern Patterns of
Juvenile Criminality**

Saloni Bahl

Research Scholar,

*Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur,
Subdistrict, Jodhpur, Lordi-Pandit Ji, Rajasthan, India 342037*

Dr. Meenakshi Punia

Assistant Professor,

*Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur,
Subdistrict, Jodhpur, Lordi-Pandit Ji, Rajasthan, India 342037*

Recommended Citation

Saloni Bahl and Dr. Meenakshi Punia, *Youth Deviance in Urban Landscapes:
Integrating Classical Insights of the Chicago School with Modern Patterns of
Juvenile Criminality*, 4 IJHRLR 103-127 (2025).

Available at www.humanrightlawreview.in/archives/.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the International
Journal of Human Rights Law Review by an authorized Lex Assisto Media and
Publications administrator. For more information, please contact
info@humanrightlawreview.in.

Youth Deviance in Urban Landscapes: Integrating Classical Insights of the Chicago School with Modern Patterns of Juvenile Criminality

Saloni Bahl

Research Scholar,

*Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur,
Subdistrict, Jodhpur, Lordi-Pandit Ji, Rajasthan, India 342037*

Dr. Meenakshi Punia

Assistant Professor,

*Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur,
Subdistrict, Jodhpur, Lordi-Pandit Ji, Rajasthan, India 342037*

Manuscript Received

01 May 2025

Manuscript Accepted

03 May 2025

Manuscript Published

06 May. 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a comprehensive theoretical examination of juvenile criminality through the lens of the Chicago School of Sociology, particularly drawing upon its foundational concepts of urban ecology, social disorganization, and community-based explanations of deviance. As juvenile crime becomes increasingly complex and spatially diversified in the 21st century, revisiting classical sociological frameworks offers both analytical depth and historical continuity. This study critically engages with theories of various thinkers, exploring how social disorganization disrupts community control mechanisms, weakens institutional bonds, and creates conditions conducive to youth delinquency. The paper traces the evolution of these ideas and examines their contemporary relevance in understanding juvenile offending in both global south and north urban contexts. In doing so, it connects early 20th-century urban sociological theory with modern manifestations of crime among youth, such as gang affiliation, online deviance, and spatial marginalization. This theoretical reappraisal argues for the reintegration of classical sociological perspectives in contemporary criminological inquiry, especially in juvenile justice policy and intervention. It advocates for neighbourhood-level reforms, youth mentorship, and community revitalization strategies that echo the preventive

frameworks suggested by early sociologists. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that while the structural contours of cities may have evolved, the foundational insights of the Chicago School remain strikingly relevant to addressing juvenile criminality in modern urban societies.

KEYWORDS

Juvenile Criminality, Youth Deviance, Chicago School of Sociology, Urban Ecology, Sociological Criminology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile criminality has emerged as a critical area of concern for contemporary societies grappling with the challenges of youth deviance, social fragmentation, and urban disintegration. As the incidence of crimes committed by minors continues to rise, understanding the underlying sociological foundations becomes imperative for policymakers, academicians, and practitioners alike. This study engages with the sociological inquiry into juvenile criminality by revisiting the foundational framework offered by the Chicago School of Sociology, particularly its theory of social disorganization. The Chicago School, with its early 20th-century investigations into urban life and delinquency, posited that crime is less a product of individual pathology and more an outcome of the disintegration of communal structures, lack of social control, and breakdown of normative values within neighbourhoods.

Applying these insights to the current context, especially in rapidly urbanizing and socioeconomically stratified regions, offers a nuanced understanding of how factors like poverty, migration, family disruption, educational marginalization, and environmental decay coalesce to influence juvenile behaviour. With the urban periphery becoming breeding grounds for both opportunity and exclusion, young individuals often find themselves navigating spaces devoid of guidance, surveillance, or social capital making them susceptible to deviant subcultures and criminal engagements.

Moreover, peer dynamics, digital influence, and institutional failures further exacerbate this drift toward delinquency. The present inquiry seeks to contextualize these patterns within the broader sociological framework while also emphasizing the contemporary relevance of the Chicago School's propositions. By critically analyzing neighbourhood ecology, collective efficacy, and the weakening of informal social controls, this study aims to map the sociological contours of juvenile crime and calls for a

reinvigoration of community-based interventions. It argues that addressing juvenile delinquency requires not merely punitive legal reforms but a deeper sociological commitment to rebuilding communities, fostering collective responsibility, and restoring the social fabric that sustains normative youth development.

1.1. Introduction to Juvenile Criminality Theories

The study of juvenile criminality has been a longstanding and multifaceted endeavour, seeking to comprehend the complex interplay of factors that contribute to delinquent behaviours among young individuals. Scholars and researchers have delved into a plethora of theoretical frameworks, each attempting to provide insights into the root causes, motivations, and societal influences that shape juvenile criminal behaviour. One prominent theory in the realm of juvenile criminality is the Strain Theory, which posits that individuals engage in delinquent activities as a response to the strain caused by a disconnection between societal goals and the means available to achieve them. For juveniles, this strain may manifest in various forms, such as economic disparities, limited educational opportunities, or societal expectations.¹ The Strain Theory underscores the importance of examining societal structures and inequalities as potential catalysts for juvenile delinquency.

In contrast, today the Social Learning Theory contends that criminal behaviour is acquired through the process of observational learning and modelling. Juveniles, in this context, may adopt delinquent behaviours by observing and imitating others in their social environment.² The theory emphasizes the significance of familial and peer influences, suggesting that the transmission of criminal norms occurs within interpersonal relationships. Exploring the nuances of these social dynamics becomes crucial in devising preventive measures to disrupt the cycle of learned criminal behaviour among juveniles.

Another pertinent perspective is the Routine Activity Theory, which shifts the focus to the routine activities and daily behaviours of juveniles.³ This theory asserts that criminal opportunities arise when motivated offenders encounter suitable targets in the absence of capable guardianship. While the study

¹ Robert H. Aseltine, Jr., Susan Gore, Jennifer Gordon, *Life Stress, Anger and Anxiety, and Delinquency: An Empirical Test of General Strain Theory*, 41 *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 256-275 (2000).

² *Id.*

³ D. Wayne Osgood, Janet K. Wilson, Patrick M. O'Malley, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, *Routine Activities and Individual Deviant Behaviour*, 61 *American Sociological Review* 635-655 (1996).

of the routine activities of juveniles sheds light on the temporal and spatial dimensions of their involvement in criminal acts.⁴ This approach prompts an exploration of environmental factors and the role of supervision in mitigating opportunities for juvenile delinquency.⁵ The psychological theories also play a significant role in understanding juvenile criminality, with the Psychopathy Theory positing that certain personality traits and disorders may predispose individuals, including juveniles, to engage in criminal behaviour. Factors such as impulsivity, lack of empathy, and a propensity for thrill-seeking are believed to contribute to delinquent tendencies.⁶ The integration of psychological perspectives into the broader framework of juvenile criminality theories offers a nuanced understanding of individual differences and vulnerabilities that may influence criminal propensities among young people.

The Strain Theory, Social Learning Theory, Routine Activity Theory, and Psychopathy Theory do not operate in isolation. Theories often intersect, complementing one another to provide a comprehensive understanding of juvenile criminality. The Complex Integrated Model, for instance, integrates multiple theories to offer a holistic perspective on the diverse factors contributing to juvenile delinquency. This integrated approach recognizes the intricate interplay between social, environmental, and individual factors, acknowledging that no single theory can fully encapsulate the complexity of juvenile criminal behaviour.

The study of juvenile criminality theories is not only an academic pursuit but it also holds immense practical implications for policymakers, law enforcement, and practitioners involved in juvenile justice. As societies grapple with the persistent challenge of juvenile delinquency, informed interventions grounded in theoretical insights become imperative. By understanding the root causes and dynamics of juvenile criminality, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to prevent delinquency, rehabilitate offenders, and foster environments conducive to positive youth development.

1.1.1. Overview of Criminological Theories

The field of criminology encompasses a rich tapestry of theories that endeavour to explain the complexities of criminal behaviour and the factors influencing its occurrence. These criminological theories provide

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Eric Rutger Leukfeldt & Majid Yar, *Applying Routine Activity Theory to Cybercrime: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis*, 37 *Deviant Behaviour* 263-280 (2016).

frameworks for understanding the motivations, social structures, and individual characteristics that contribute to criminal conduct.⁷ From classical perspectives to contemporary models, the study of criminological theories spans various paradigms, each offering unique insights into the nature and causes of crime.

One foundational theory in criminology is Classical Criminology, which emerged during the Enlightenment era. Rooted in the works of figures like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, this theory posits that individuals engage in criminal behaviour after rational consideration of the potential benefits and risks. The Classical School emphasized the importance of deterrence through swift and certain punishment, aiming to dissuade individuals from committing crimes by making the punishment outweigh the perceived gains. While classical ideas have evolved over time, the emphasis on rational decision-making and the role of punishment remains influential in contemporary criminological thought.

Building upon classical foundations, Positivist Criminology shifted the focus from rational choice to empirical observations and scientific methods. Positivist theorists, such as Cesare Lombroso, sought to identify biological, psychological, and sociological factors associated with criminality. The notion of the "born criminal" and the exploration of atavistic features marked Lombroso's work, laying the groundwork for later biological and psychological criminological perspectives.⁸ Positivist Criminology reflects a departure from the punitive emphasis of classical theories, advocating for individualized treatment and rehabilitation based on the identification of causal factors.⁹

Today another major category of criminological perspectives, examine the impact of societal organization on criminal behaviour. Strain Theory, for example, posits that individuals resort to crime when they experience a disjunction between societal goals and the means available to achieve them. Robert K. Merton expanded upon this theory, introducing concepts like anomie to explain how structural inequalities and cultural expectations contribute to criminal behaviour. Social structure theories also include

⁷ Ronald V. Clarke Cornish Derek B., *Modeling Offenders' Decisions: A Framework for Research and Policy*, 1 Crime Opportunity Theories (2011).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

Social Disorganization Theory, which examines how neighborhood characteristics and community breakdowns influence crime rates.

Moving beyond macro-level societal structures, Social Process Theories delve into the micro-level interactions and processes that shape criminal behaviour. Differential Association Theory, developed by Edwin H. Sutherland, asserts that individuals learn criminal behaviour through association with others who engage in such activities. This theory highlights the role of peer groups and social influences in the development of criminal norms.¹⁰ Labeling Theory, on the other hand, focuses on the societal reaction to individuals labeled as criminals, arguing that the application of labels can contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing criminal identities.

The emergence of Routine Activity Theory in the late 20th century marked a shift towards situational crime prevention. Developed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, this theory contends that crime occurs when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian.¹¹ The Routine Activity Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the spatial and temporal dimensions of criminal opportunities, prompting interventions that disrupt the convergence of these elements. The psychological Criminology explores individual traits and cognitive processes that may predispose individuals to criminal behaviour. Psychopathy, for instance, is a personality disorder characterized by traits such as impulsivity, lack of empathy, and a propensity for thrill-seeking. Psychopathy theories argue that these traits contribute to an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Additionally, Cognitive Theories delve into how individuals perceive and process information related to crime, exploring the role of decision-making processes and cognitive biases in criminal conduct.

The aforementioned criminological theories provide only a glimpse into the diverse array of perspectives within the field. Integrative models, such as Social Control Theory, attempt to synthesize elements from multiple theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of criminal

¹⁰ Jean Marie Mc. Gloin & Kyle J. Thomas, *Peer Influence and Delinquency*, 2 *Annu. Rev. Criminol.* 241 (2019).

¹¹ *Id.*

behaviour.¹² Social Control Theory, for instance, suggests that individuals are naturally inclined toward deviance, but social bonds and controls, such as family, school, and community ties, can prevent individuals from engaging in criminal activities.

2. MAJOR CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES

The classical school of criminology, which has its origins in the Enlightenment period, was instrumental in laying the framework for succeeding ideas by placing an emphasis on rational decision-making and the idea of free will. Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham are credited with being the pioneers of this perspective, which proposes that individuals participate in unlawful actions after calculating the potential rewards against the dangers of punishment. For the purpose of discouraging illegal behaviour, the Classical School argued for a prompt and guaranteed response, which would have an impact on judicial institutions and punitive measures.

A reaction to the classical conceptions of criminology, positivist criminology is characterised by its emphasis on empirical observation and scientific methodology.¹³ One of the most influential figures in this school of thought, Cesare Lombroso, was the one who first proposed the concept of the "*born criminal*" and made an effort to determine the biological, psychological, and sociological variables that are connected with criminal behaviour.¹⁴ Positivist criminologists advocated for individualised therapy that was based on the identification of causative elements that influence criminal behaviour. They shifted the emphasis away from punishment and towards rehabilitation.

Within the realm of social structure theories, the influence of societal organisation on criminal behaviour is investigated. According to the strain hypothesis, which Robert K. Merton created, individuals are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour when they feel that there is a disconnect between the goals of society and the methods that are available to achieve those goals.¹⁵ This viewpoint is expanded upon by the social

¹² Karen Hennigan & Marija Spanovic, *Gang Dynamics Through the Lens of Social Identity Theory*, Youth Gangs in International Perspective 127, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-1659-3_8 (last visited Jan 18, 2024).

¹³ Abigail Henson, Thuy-Trinh Nguyen & Ajima Olaghere, *Revising the Critical Gaze: An Inversion of Criminological Theories to Center Race, Racism, and Resistance*, 31 Crit Crim 17 (2023)

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Jie Zhang, *The Strain Theory of Suicide*, 13 Journal of Pacific Rim

disorganisation hypothesis, which investigates the ways in which the characteristics of neighbourhoods and the breakdowns in community systems influence the rates of criminal activity. The importance of social disparities and structural elements in the formation of criminal behaviour is brought to light by these academic theories.

On the other hand, social process theories concentrate on the interactions and processes that occur on a micro level and lead to criminal behaviour. According to Edwin H. Sutherland's differential association theory, individuals learn criminal behaviour by associating with other people who engage in such activities. This hypothesis was created to explain how individuals learn criminal behaviour. Labelling theory investigates the ways in which society responds to persons who have been labelled as criminals might contribute to the perpetuation of criminal identities, hence producing a self-fulfilling prophesy about criminal behaviour.

The Routine Activity Theory, which Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson initially presented, is an example of a modification to the situational crime prevention approach. According to this view, criminal activity takes place when criminals who are driven to commit crimes come into contact with eligible targets in the absence of capable guardianship. The idea of routine activity emphasises the significance of comprehending the spatial and temporal characteristics of criminal possibilities, thereby offering insights that may be utilised to develop interventions that disrupt these opportunities.

2.1. Theories in Understanding Juvenile Criminality

As one walks through the darkly illuminated halls of society, where theories are intertwined with the complexities of human behaviour, the study of juvenile criminality emerges as a gripping narrative that seeks to fathom the mystery of adolescent infractions. By delving deeper than the superficial manifestations of juvenile delinquency, this investigation aims to untangle the threads of causality, motivations, and societal influences that are woven into the fabric of adolescent misbehaviour. The significance of theories, which are formidable instruments that shed light on the veiled pathways that lead to juvenile delinquency, is at the centre of this academic journey.

Beyond merely satisfying academic curiosity, the significance of criminological theories in comprehending juvenile delinquency lies in the fact that they provide a conceptual

framework that enables one to grasp the intricate dance of circumstances that contribute to delinquency.¹⁶ Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can use theories as compasses to guide them through the complex maze of causal factors, so assisting them in navigating the complex terrain of adolescent misbehaviour. As the kaleidoscope of theories continues to develop, each lens illuminates a different part of the multidimensional phenomenon, which contributes to a more thorough knowledge of juvenile delinquency.

The potential of criminological theories to shed light on the underlying motivations that drive children to engage in criminal behaviour is one of the most important advantages of these theories.¹⁷ There are classical ideas that suggest that human behaviour is governed by rational decision-making. These beliefs are reminiscent of the Enlightenment period. When it comes to the field of juvenile delinquency, this represents an investigation of the manner in which young brains assess the attractiveness of illegal activities against the probable repercussions of engaging in those activities. In order for researchers to be able to identify the complex dynamics that drive adolescents to engage in criminal acts or refrain from doing so, they must first have a grasp of the rational calculus that they engage in.

The positivist criminology, which has its origins firmly rooted in empirical observation, broadens the scope of the investigation to include biological, psychological, and societal elements that influence juvenile crime. The significance of positivist theories rests in the fact that they place a strong emphasis on the empirical study of persons, with the goal of identifying predispositions or environmental situations that may lead to the development of potentially criminal behaviours.¹⁸ When seen through this lens, the interaction between nature and nurture in the formation of juvenile delinquency is brought into focus, which helps to direct interventions that target the underlying causes of criminal behaviour.

The routine activity theory, which is a stalwart in the field of situational crime prevention, extends its significance to understanding juvenile delinquency by analysing the activities

¹⁶ Elizabeth Cauffman, Laurence Steinberg & Alex R. Piquero, *Psychological, Neuropsychological and Physiological Correlates of Serious Antisocial Behaviour In Adolescence: The Role Of Self-Control*, 43 *Criminology* 133 (2005)

¹⁷ Robert J. Sampson Laub John H., *A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime*, in *Developmental and Life-course Criminological Theories* (2015).

¹⁸ E. Moffitt Terrie, *Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Offending: A Complementary Pair of Developmental Theories*, in *Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency* (1997)

and situations that adolescents find themselves in on a daily basis. Through the examination of the confluence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of effective guardianship, this theory sheds insight on the situational dynamics that may either favour or hinder the development of juvenile delinquency. The pragmatic approach to crime prevention that routine activity theory takes is what gives it its significance. It offers insights for interventions that disrupt the routine activities that are conducive to criminal possibilities.

2.1.1. Theoretical Frameworks in Comprehending Juvenile Criminal Behaviour

The study of juvenile criminal behaviour is a complex and thorough field that demands a complete approach in order to understand the intricate behaviours of young people who engage in delinquent activities. The importance of theoretical frameworks in comprehending adolescent criminality cannot be underestimated. These frameworks offer the necessary conceptual structure for conducting a systematic and thorough research into the various factors that lead to delinquency.¹⁹

In the process of shaping the research inquiry, theoretical frameworks serve as guiding structures that provide a conceptual lens through which academics can interpret, analyze, and contextualize the behaviour of juvenile offenders. The organisation of empirical findings, the identification of patterns, and the establishment of links between numerous factors that contribute to the understanding of why some adolescents participate in criminal behaviours are all made possible with the assistance of these frameworks.²⁰ The study of juvenile delinquency runs the risk of being fragmented and lacking in depth if it does not have a theoretical base. This will hamper the creation of full insights into this complicated social phenomenon.

Furthermore, researchers are able to construct hypotheses and research questions that are informed and focused when they apply theoretical frameworks. The scholars are guided in the process of posing targeted queries that are connected with the conceptual foundations of the framework that they have chosen when they decide to adopt a theoretical perspective. Not only does this

¹⁹ Brian J. Smith, *Marginalized Youth, Delinquency, and Education: The Need for Critical-Interpretive Research*, 32 *The Urban Review* 293 (2000).

²⁰ *Id.*

targeted strategy improve the accuracy of the research, but it also makes a contribution to the accumulation of knowledge within the field of studies pertaining to juvenile delinquency. A strain theory perspective, for instance, may give rise to issues concerning the influence of societal pressures and economic disparities on the criminal behaviour of juveniles, thereby driving a more detailed investigation of these particular features.²¹

There is also a significant part that theoretical frameworks play in directing the selection of empirical evidence and the interpretation of that evidence. They provide researchers with a lens that allows them to filter and make sense of the large amount of data that is relevant to the criminal behaviour of juveniles. When researchers do not have a theoretical framework, it may be difficult for them to discern meaningful patterns or identify critical variables that are essential to comprehending the factors that contribute to the development of criminal behaviour. Theories are analytical tools that help in the identification of relevant components and assist the interpretation of data within a cohesive and structured framework. Theories serve as a catalyst for the development of theories.

When it comes to an understanding adolescent criminal behaviour, the significance of theoretical frameworks is essential to the progression of information, the precision of research inquiries, and the development of therapies that are effective.²² When it comes to comprehending the myriad of factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency, the adoption of theoretical views offers a method that is both structured and systematic. In the process of creating hypotheses, analysing empirical evidence, and contributing to the body of cumulative knowledge within the discipline, researchers are guided by theoretical frameworks.²³ In the end, it is vital to have a well-informed understanding of juvenile criminal behaviour that is based on theoretical perspectives in order to establish targeted interventions and policies that are aimed at preventing and resolving delinquency in a holistic manner.

²¹ Ian Lambie & Isabel Randell, *Creating a Firestorm: A Review of Children Who Deliberately Light Fires*, 31 *Clinical Psychology Review* 307 (2011).

²² Brian J. Smith, *Marginalized Youth, Delinquency, and Education: The Need for Critical-Interpretive Research*, 32 *The Urban Review* 293 (2000).

²³ *Id.* at 21.

3. CHICAGO SCHOOL OF CRIMINALITY

3.1 *Historical Context and Emergence*

The establishment of the Chicago School of Criminology in the early 20th century was a watershed point in the study of criminology. This school of thought offered a distinctive approach that centred on the social and environmental elements that influence criminal behaviour. It is necessary to investigate the urban landscape of Chicago during the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century in order to comprehend the historical circumstances that led to the establishment of the Chicago School.

The city of Chicago went through a period of fast industrialization and urbanisation at the turn of the century, converting from a tiny trade station into a bustling metropolis. As a result of the promise of work opportunities in developing industries, the city evolved into a melting pot to accommodate a wide variety of immigrant communities. Nevertheless, this rapid urban growth also brought forth considerable social issues, such as neighbourhoods that were congested and destitute, social institutions that were under strain, and an infusion of foreign cultures that interacted with the urban fabric.

The Chicago School of Criminology came into being against the backdrop of the urban instability and social transformation that was taking on at the time.²⁴ The academics who were affiliated with the Chicago School, which included notable personalities such as Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Clifford R. Shaw, endeavoured to comprehend criminal behaviour not solely as an act committed by an individual, but rather as a consequence of the social and ecological circumstances that were present at the time of the violation. A method to the study of criminal behaviour that is based on sociology was established as a result of their work, which is frequently referred to as social ecology.

The idea of social disorganization was one of the fundamental ideas that were presented by the Chicago School. According to this point of view, high crime rates were not innate to certain groups of people or individuals; rather, they were the result of the disintegration of social institutions and the weakening of communal ties. The academics believed that neighbourhoods that were undergoing social disorganization lacked the social coherence and informal social control

²⁴ Robert J. Sampson, *Transcending Tradition: New Directions In Community Research, Chicago Style*, 40 *Criminology* 213 (2002)

mechanisms that were necessary to prevent crime. As a result, these neighbourhoods had greater rates of delinquency and criminal behaviour.²⁵

The influence of the Chicago School expanded beyond the realm of academics, influencing both public policy and the procedures of the criminal justice system.²⁶ The discussions regarding the fundamental reasons for criminal behaviour and the significance of addressing social disorganisation and community elements in the context of crime prevention were sparked as a result of the insights that were provided by the research conducted by the school. Because of the school's emphasis on the urban environment, there were also repercussions for urban planning. These repercussions informed conversations about how cities should be designed and structured in order to promote social cohesion and reduce crime. Not only did the contributions of the Chicago School revolutionise the science of criminology, but they also had far-reaching implications for public policy and urban planning. As a result, the Chicago School left behind an enduring legacy in the understanding of crime and the social origins of criminal behaviour.

3.2 Background of Chicago School's Development

It was against the backdrop of Chicago's rapidly changing metropolitan scene that the Chicago School of Criminology, a pioneering academic movement that arose in the early 20th century, came into existence. During this time period, the city underwent significant sociological and ecological shifts, and the development of the school was intricately connected to these changes. In order to get a complete understanding of the origins of the Chicago School, it is necessary to investigate the historical backdrop of Chicago throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the turn of the century, Chicago saw a significant transformation, going from being a tiny trade town to a bustling metropolis. This transformation was symptomatic of the greater wave of industrialization and urbanisation that was sweeping over the United States. Because of the city's rapidly increasing industrial and commercial sectors, the city became a melting pot for a wide variety of immigrant communities. These communities were driven to the city by the promise of jobs and opportunity. This increase in population led to the creation of a dense and

²⁵ Katja Franko Aas, *'Crimmigrant' Bodies and Bona Fide Travelers: Surveillance, Citizenship and Global Governance*, 15 *Theoretical Criminology* 331 (2011).

²⁶ Suzanne Mettler & Joe Soss, *The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics*, 2 *Perspectives on Politics* 55 (2004)

diverse urban environment, which presented sociological researchers with a number of obstacles as well as opportunities for their research.

The Chicago School of Criminology was established amid this dynamic metropolitan environment, which enabled it to take shape. The academics who were affiliated with the school, which included notable individuals like Clifford R. Shaw, Ernest W. Burgess, and Robert E. Park, attempted to get an understanding of the complexities of urban life, criminal behaviour, and deviant behaviour.²⁷ A break from the individualistic explanations of criminal behaviour that were prominent at the time, their work was characterised by a shift towards a more holistic and sociological approach that took into consideration the influence of social and environmental elements. The concept of social disorganisation was one of the fundamental ideas that served as the basis for the creation of the Chicago School. The researchers hypothesised that criminal behaviour was not a natural trait that was innate to particular people or groups of people, but rather that it was the result of the disintegration of social institutions that existed within particular neighbourhoods. The urban geography of Chicago served as an ideal laboratory for the study of the impact of social disorganisation on crime rates.²⁸ This was due to the fact that neighbourhoods in Chicago underwent fast shifts as a result of immigration, industry, and urban development.

Ernest W. Burgess and Robert E. Park made a significant theoretical contribution to the Chicago School by developing the concentric zone model. This model was another important contribution. The city was divided into concentric circles according to this idea, with the major commercial area located at the centre and residential zones radiating outward from the centre.²⁹ The researchers made discoveries on the dynamic nature of urban neighbourhoods through empirical observations.³⁰ They found that urban neighbourhoods are characterised by a continuous process of invasion and succession. Different immigrant groups would move into and out of these zones, which would have an effect on the social organisation and, as a result, the crime rates within each area.

The urban revolution that took place in Chicago throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century was

²⁷ David E. Apter, *The Chicago School and the Roots of Urban Ethnography*, 10 *Ethnography* 375 (2009)

²⁸ James F. Short, *The Level Of Explanation Problem Revisited—The American Society Of Criminology 1997 Presidential Address*, 36 *Criminology* 3 (1998).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

a significant historical background that played a significant role in the establishment of the Chicago School of Criminology. Taking into consideration the intricacies of urban life and the difficulties brought about by social disorganisation, the scholars at the school were the first to pioneer a sociological approach to the study of criminal behaviour. It was the theoretical notions, such as social disorganisation, the concentric zone model, and cultural transmission, that constituted the cornerstone of the study of criminology. These concepts shaped later developments in the understanding of criminal behaviour. The empirical research methodologies that were utilised by the Chicago School provided the framework for a more scientific approach to criminology. As a result, the Chicago School left behind an enduring legacy that continues to influence modern research and policy discussions.

3.3. Core Principles of Chicago School

The concept of social disorganisation was at the forefront of the key principles that led to the establishment of the Chicago School. This theory argued that criminal behaviour was not an innate trait of certain individuals or groups, but rather a consequence of the breakdown of social institutions within particular neighbourhoods.³¹ Specifically, individuals and groups were not the cause of criminal behaviour. Several academics, including Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Clifford R. Shaw, posited that communities that were experiencing high levels of social disorganisation, which was characterised by factors such as population turnover, economic instability, and cultural heterogeneity, were more likely to be susceptible to increased rates of criminal behaviour. The Chicago School of thought is credited with shifting the attention away from individual pathology and towards the collective collapse of social order as a factor in criminal behaviour.

One further essential principle that the Chicago School adhered to was the ecological approach, which was encapsulated in the concentric zone model that Burgess and Park devised. Using this approach, the urban landscape was segmented into concentric circles, beginning with the central business district and progressing all the way to residential regions and suburbs. According to this theory, cities went through a period of invasion and succession, during which diverse social and ethnic groups moved into and out of different zones. The scientists claimed that the dynamic interaction between these groups had an effect on

³¹ Max Haller & Markus Hadler, *How Social Relations and Structures Can Produce Happiness and Unhappiness: An International Comparative Analysis*, 75 Soc Indic Res 169 (2006).

the social organisation of neighbourhoods and, as a result, the rates of criminal activity throughout those neighbourhoods.

A further layer was added to the fundamental concepts that the Chicago School was founded on when Shaw and McKay introduced the concept of cultural transmission. The idea behind this notion was that criminal behaviour was passed down through social networks and cultural processes that occurred within neighbourhoods. As a result of Shaw and McKay's research, the persistence of criminal activity in specific regions over the course of multiple generations was brought to light.³² They attributed this phenomenon to the transmission of criminal norms and values through social interactions. The concept of cultural transmission placed an emphasis on the role that informal social control mechanisms, such as influences from family and peers, have in shaping criminal behaviour and contributing to the continuation of deviant subcultures within certain communities.

Furthermore, the Chicago School had a significant influence on public policy and urban planning, in addition to the fundamental values that it upheld. Conversations regarding the fundamental reasons behind criminal behaviour were sparked as a result of the focus placed on social disorganisation and neighbourhood issues as elements that determine criminal behaviour.³³ The relevance of addressing social and environmental circumstances in crime prevention methods was being recognised by policymakers and practitioners, and they began to acknowledge its value. The ideas of the Chicago School had an impact on urban planning methods, which led to concerns of how the design and structure of cities could have an effect on social cohesion and crime rates.

4. CRITIQUES AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

4.1. Criticisms of Chicago School Theories

In spite of the fact that it has made substantial contributions to the science of criminology, the Chicago School of Criminology has not been immune to many criticisms and limitations. The criticisms presented here shed light on the areas in which the theories that the Chicago School created may be lacking in their ability to explain the intricacies of criminal behaviour and to comprehend the larger context in which criminal activity takes place.³⁴

³² Paul E. Bellair, *Social Interaction And Community Crime: Examining The Importance Of Neighbour Networks*, 35 *Criminology* 677 (1997)

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Jacob I. Stowell et al., *Immigration and The Recent Violent Crime Drop In The*

There is a significant criticism that centres on the fact that the Chicago School's theories place an excessive amount of attention on urban areas. There are many who believe that the ecological and sociological ideas that the Chicago School created would not be universally relevant in different environments, such as rural or suburban places. It's possible that the ideas, which are based on the particular circumstances that existed in Chicago in the early 20th century, don't adequately reflect the myriad of factors that influence criminal behaviour in a number of settings. Within the realm of criminological discourse, the question of whether or not the theories of the Chicago School may be applied to contexts other than metropolitan environments has been a topic of ongoing discussion.

The deterministic nature of several Chicago School notions, in particular the focus placed on social disorganisation, is another complaint that has been levelled against the school. Those who disagree with the theory believe that it may oversimplify the relationship between neighbourhood characteristics and criminal activity, completely ignoring the agency of individuals and the ability for change that exists within communities.³⁵ In spite of the fact that social disorganisation emphasises the significance of social institutions, it may downplay the impact that individual decisions and resiliency play in overcoming challenging circumstances. Some people believe that this deterministic viewpoint could be detrimental to the efforts that are being made to establish effective interventions and policies that are targeted at reducing crime.

There has been criticism directed towards the ecological approach, which is represented in the concentric zone model, due to the fact that it presents urban development in a static manner. The model's depiction of metropolitan zones as static and unchanging may not accurately reflect the dynamic character of modern cities, according to some who are critical of the concept. Over the course of time, urban landscapes undergo transformations, and it is possible that the concentric zone model does not effectively depict the intricacies of contemporary urbanisation. These complications include suburbanization, gentrification, and transitions in population distribution. The static character of the model has been criticised for limiting its applicability to contemporary urban settings, which has led to the

United States: A Pooled, Cross-Sectional Time-Series Analysis Of Metropolitan Areas, 47 *Criminology* 889 (2009).

³⁵ Kathy Charmaz, *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory: Paperback Edition*, 1 (2010)

criticism.

4.2. Limitations and Critiques of the Chicago School's Perspectives

Even with its revolutionary contributions to the subject, the Chicago School of Criminology is not impervious to the challenges and constraints that it faces. It is essential to recognise and comprehend these criticisms in order to conduct a detailed evaluation of the perspectives held by the Chicago School and to determine whether or not they are applicable to the present discourse on criminology. The regional and contextual specificity of the Chicago School's beliefs is a frequent criticism that has been levelled against the school. The school was established as a response to the social issues that were prevalent in Chicago at the beginning of the 20th century, and its theories were constructed based on the urban conditions that existed during that time period. Detractors have argued that the applicability of these theories to other geographical situations, such as rural or suburban areas, may be restricted.³⁶ It is possible that the Chicago School's ideas are not universally applicable since the dynamics of urban surroundings in the early 1900s may not have been able to properly reflect the complexities of crime in a variety of contexts.

With regard to the chronological relevance of the Chicago School's theories, there is a constraint that is tied to this. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have been major changes to both the urban landscape and the social institutions that exist within it.³⁷ The evolution of cities, the shift in cultural norms, and the introduction of new aspects to social relationships have all been brought about by significant technical developments. Given the static character of certain Chicago School concepts, such as the concentric zone model, it is possible that these changes are not effectively reflected in the concepts.³⁸ It has been argued by critics that the theories may not be able to adapt to the dynamics of contemporary society, which could potentially limit their ability to explain current crime patterns.

One of the primary points of contention in the criticism of social disorganisation theory is that it is a deterministic theory. Some people believe that the theory may oversimplify the

³⁶ Joseph E. McGrath & Bettina A. Johnson, *Methodology Makes Meaning: How Both Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigms Shape Evidence and Its Interpretation*, in *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* 31 (2003)

³⁷ Marc Antrop, *Why Landscapes of the Past Are Important for the Future*, 70 *Landscape and Urban Planning* 21 (2005)

³⁸ *Id.*

connection between social disorganisation and criminal behaviour, despite the fact that it emphasises the influence that neighbourhood features have on crime rates. It is possible that individual agency and the capacity for resilience within communities are overlooked when structural concerns, such as economic instability and cultural heterogeneity, are given priority.³⁹ Critics argue that this deterministic view could impede efforts to establish effective interventions and policies targeted at reducing crime. They argue that this view may devalue the significance of personal choices and the capacity for positive change within communities, which undermines the effectiveness of laws and interventions.

There have been criticisms levelled against the ecological perspective, which is represented in the concentric zone model, due to the fact that it may portray urban growth in a reductionist manner. The model simplifies the intricacies of urban structures and processes by classifying metropolitan areas into concentric rings for the purpose of its classification. It has been argued by detractors that this simple picture may fail to capture the varied nature of modern cities, which includes the consequences of suburbanization, gentrification, and demographic transitions.⁴⁰ It has been determined that the inability of the concentric zone model to take into consideration these nuances is a limitation in its capacity to provide a thorough knowledge of the spatial dimensions of crime in contemporary urban environments.

The cultural transmission theory has been criticised for the possibility that it stigmatises specific cultures, despite the fact that it is useful in understanding the continuation of criminal practices. It is possible that the labelling of certain communities as intrinsically prone to criminality is unintentionally contributed to by the emphasis placed on the fact that certain neighbourhoods have been plagued by criminal activity for multiple generations. There are many who believe that this kind of labelling can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and impede efforts to address the underlying reasons of criminal behaviour.⁴¹ This might potentially result in people of these neighbourhoods being stigmatised and discriminated against.

The theories of the Chicago School have been subject to criticism due to the fact that they are historically and culturally

³⁹ Stephan Barthel et al., *History and Local Management of a Biodiversity-Rich, Urban Cultural Landscape*, 10 *Ecology and Society* (2005)

⁴⁰ Cody Hochstenbach & Sako Musterd, *Gentrification and the Suburbanization of Poverty: Changing Urban Geographies through Boom and Bust Periods*, 39 *Urban Geography* 26 (2018)

⁴¹ *Id.*

distinctive. Although these ideas were developed in the early 20th century as a response to the urban difficulties that were prevalent at the time, it is possible that they may not adequately account for the socio-cultural shifts that have taken place since that time.⁴² Some people believe that the theories do not adequately account for the intricacies of a society that is increasingly technologically advanced and globalised, and in which new types of criminal activity have emerged.

For the purpose of developing criminological theories and ensuring that they continue to be relevant and applicable in a variety of social circumstances, it is vital to acknowledge and confront these limits.

5. RELEVANCE OF CHICAGO SCHOOL IDEAS WITH DIGITAL JUVENILE CRIMINALITY

The question of whether or not the concepts of the Chicago School are still applicable in the context of comprehending and analysing digital juvenile delinquency in the modern period is one that is of significant importance. Although the ideas of the Chicago School were formed in the early 20th century to explain patterns of urban crime, their adaptability and relevance to new types of criminal behaviour, such as digital adolescent criminality, have been a focus of continued investigation despite the fact that they were initially developed to explain urban crime patterns.⁴³

For the purpose of analysing the spatial distribution of digital adolescent criminality, the ecological viewpoint of the Chicago School, and more specifically the concentric zone model, can be utilised. According to the Chicago School, online environments can be divided into concentric zones, which are comparable to the physical zones that are designated by the school.⁴⁴ It is possible that the innermost zone is comprised of regions that have a greater incidence of cybercrimes, whilst the outside zones may consist of areas that have more effective preventative measures and digital security procedures. When it comes to cybersecurity, conducting an investigation into the spatial patterns of digital adolescent delinquency can provide valuable insights for targeted solutions.

When it comes to the investigation of digital juvenile

⁴² Ruth Mcmanus & Philip J. Ethington, *Suburbs in Transition: New Approaches to Suburban History*, 34 *Urban History* 317 (2007)

⁴³ Stephen E. Brown Geis Stephen E. Brown, Stephen E. Brown, Finn-Aage Esbensen, Finn-Aage Esbensen, Gilbert Geis, Gilbert, *Criminology: Explaining Crime and Its Context* (9 ed. 2015)

⁴⁴ Bryan Vila, *A General Paradigm For Understanding Criminal Behaviour: Extending Evolutionary Ecological Theory*, 32 *Criminology* 311 (1994)

delinquency, the Chicago School's global viewpoint is something that should be considered. In the internet age, young criminals have access to a global platform, and geographical limits do not limit cybercrimes. Having an understanding of how the concepts presented by the Chicago School can be implemented on a worldwide scale is beneficial in the process of building international partnerships and strategies to combat digital delinquency among young people. The recognition of the interconnection of online spaces on a worldwide scale is absolutely necessary in order to build comprehensive responses to the problem of digital juvenile delinquency prevention.

Moreover, the rapid pace at which technological advancements occur presents a challenge to the temporal relevance of the ideals that are associated with the Chicago School. It is possible that the quick improvements in digital technologies would exceed the adaptability of the ideas, which were developed in an era before the advent of digital technology. In order to ensure that the ideas presented by the Chicago School continue to be relevant in the context of comprehending the ever-evolving landscape of digital juvenile delinquency, it is vital to make consistent updates and revisions.

5.1 Extending Chicago School Theories to Cyber Realms

Bringing the theories of the Chicago School of Criminology to the worlds of cyberspace is an interesting investigation into the extent to which classic criminological theory can be applied to the modern era of digital technology. Its extension to the cyber environment is a testament to the adaptability of these core notions in the face of changing social landscapes. Although the Chicago School's theories were initially designed to explain urban crime patterns in the physical world, its extension to the cyber environment showcases the adaptability of these concepts.

It is possible to apply the theory of social disorganisation, which is a cornerstone of the Chicago School, to the realms of cyberspace in order to provide light on the dynamics of online communities and the impact that they have on cybercrimes. In the realm of digital technology, social disorganisation may take the form of the disintegration of conventional social structures, with online groups taking the place of actual neighbourhoods.⁴⁵ The presence of high turnover rates, economic inequities, and cultural variety within virtual spaces can all contribute to the

⁴⁵ Ichiro Kawachi, Bruce P Kennedy & Richard G Wilkinson, *Crime: Social Disorganization and Relative Deprivation*, 48 *Social Science & Medicine* 719 (1999)

creation of an atmosphere that is susceptible to cyber delinquency.⁴⁶ The application of the idea of social disorganisation to the realms of cyberspace enables academics to gain an understanding of how the disintegration of social structures that exist online influences the participation of individuals, particularly minors, in behaviours that are considered to be cybercriminal.

In the context of cyber worlds, the cultural transmission hypothesis, which is a key notion of the Chicago School, is extremely relevant. Within the realm of cyber behaviour, the propagation of deviant norms and values through online social networks, forums, and peer groups plays a crucial influence in moulding the behaviour of individuals. There is a possibility that digital subcultures could form, which would spread beliefs that encourage individuals, including children, to engage in cybercriminal actions.⁴⁷ In order to comprehend the perpetuation of cyber delinquency and to devise measures to prevent negative impacts within online networks, it is essential to have a solid understanding of how cultural transmission operates in the cyber environment.

In the study of cybercrimes, empirical research methodologies, which are typically associated with the Chicago School, find a place of resonance. It is possible to gain useful insights into the frequency of criminal behaviour and patterns of behaviour by mapping and analysing cybercrime rates, demographic information, and socio-economic variables in the digital world.⁴⁸ It is possible for academics to discover correlations between cyber behaviour and a variety of social and environmental elements via the utilisation of rigorous empirical research. This can contribute to the development of evidence-based policies for the prevention and intervention of cybercrime.

The Chicago School's classical ideas have been criticised for their failure to take into account individual-level characteristics, which has led to the need for adaptation to incorporate a more comprehensive knowledge of cyber behaviour. When considering cyber worlds, it is of the utmost importance to investigate individual motives, psychological aspects, and levels of comprehension of digital technology.⁴⁹ The Chicago School places

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ Thomas J. Holt & Heith Copes, *Transferring Subcultural Knowledge On-Line: Practices and Beliefs of Persistent Digital Pirates*, 31 *Deviant Behaviour* 625 (2010)

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 82

⁴⁹ Loretta J. Stalans & Christopher M. Donner, *Explaining Why Cybercrime Occurs: Criminological and Psychological Theories*, in *Cyber Criminology* 25 (Hamid Jahankhani ed., 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97181->

a strong emphasis on including individual-level elements, which is in line with the requirement to take into account the diversity of personal qualities that influence participation in cybercrimes. These characteristics include motivations such as the thrill of hacking, the desire to earn financial gain, and ideological views.

The Chicago School's ability to adapt to the cyber worlds is aligned with the expansion of the conception of crime beyond traditional offences committed on the street level. Cybercrimes are a new manifestation of criminal behaviour that extends beyond the confines of physical streets. Recognising this larger spectrum enables the incorporation of the core ideas of the Chicago School into the examination of new and developing criminal behaviours that are made possible by digital technologies. In order for researchers to unravel the complexities of digital criminal behaviour, it is necessary to widen the understanding of crime to include cyber offences. This allows researchers to use the theories developed by the Chicago School.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the enduring relevance of the Chicago School's theory of social disorganization offers a compelling lens through which to understand and address the complex phenomenon of juvenile criminality. This framework, rooted in an ecological understanding of urban environments, highlights how structural factors such as poverty, residential instability, weakened family and educational institutions, and the erosion of informal social controls collectively contribute to youth deviance. The study reaffirms that juvenile crime is not merely the outcome of individual moral failings, but a manifestation of broader social disintegration that fosters environments where deviant behaviour becomes normalized or even necessary for survival.

In today's context marked by rapid urbanization, socio-economic inequities, and the rise of digital subcultures—these sociological insights are even more critical. As the findings suggest, addressing juvenile delinquency effectively requires moving beyond reactive punitive measures toward proactive community-based interventions that restore social cohesion, strengthen neighbourhood networks, and engage families, schools, and local stakeholders in creating resilient support systems for at-risk youth. Revitalizing public spaces, investing in education and youth engagement programs, and empowering local communities to reclaim agency in crime prevention are essential steps toward

curbing the influence of criminogenic environments.

Ultimately, the solution lies not solely in reforming the juvenile justice system, but in reinvigorating the moral and structural foundations of society itself—an approach that echoes the foundational philosophy of the Chicago School and remains indispensable for contemporary criminological discourse.