

Civic Participation, Regional Subcultures, and Violence

The Differential Effects of Secular and Religious Participation on Adult and Juvenile Homicide

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This analysis extends prior macro-level homicide research by examining the links between civic participation, regional subcultures of violence, and age-specific homicide rates. To this end, an integrated community resource perspective was developed and this approach was contrasted with community deficit perspectives. To lend greater specificity, the distinctive effects of religious and secular participation on community levels of juvenile and adult homicide were also considered. Analyses of county-level adult and juvenile homicide offending patterns suggest that regional subcultures as well as religious and secular forms of civic participation play important—yet age-graded—roles in reducing interpersonal violence.

Keywords: *homicide; civic participation; regional subcultures; social capital; religion*

Two important features of violent crime in the United States continue to be most challenging for researchers. The first is that violence is not equally distributed across age groups, with a large proportion of homicidal violence in particular being concentrated at the lower end of the age distribution. Second, macro-level units

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such as cities and counties with apparently similar cultural, structural, and compositional characteristics display a tremendous degree of variation in their rates of violence. Sociological criminologists have long attempted to explain both of these phenomena, but rarely have they examined their intersection (see Allen & Steffensmeier, 1989; Ousey & Augustine, 2001). Reasons for this neglect abound, but arguably the most pressing of these is the paucity of age-graded conceptual models designed to explain cross-community variation in serious crime rates.

Traditional macro-level models of crime are generally ill suited to explain age-graded community-level variation in crime rates. Traditional theories typically assume that the cultural and structural features of communities exert criminogenic pressures evenly across all segments of the population. But as scholars become increasingly cognizant of the fact that criminogenic factors rarely influence both juveniles and adults in the same ways, such assumptions are beginning to come under fire. For example, to assume that the relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and crime rates is equivalent for adults and juveniles is highly questionable, and in fact mounting empirical evidence suggests this is not the case (Allen & Steffensmeier, 1989; Sampson, 1987; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994). Cultural arguments based on regional differences in violence do not fare much better when it comes to explaining variation in juvenile homicide rates, although they are supported for adults (see Sampson, 1987; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994). These disparities are probably attributable to the fact that the norms and values central to cultural theories of violence are not fully internalized by youth and thus may not govern their interactions as they do for adults. Taken together, the conceptual limitations evident in prior research, as well as the empirical evidence, provide a basis for challenging the prevalent assumption in macro-level research that the cultural and structural features of communities assert equivalent influences on adult and juvenile homicide rates.

In the following analysis, we address this problem and extend prior research in several significant ways. First, we attempt to depart substantially from existing research, most of which focuses on community deficits and its relationship to crime. In contrast to a community deficits approach, we articulate a community resource perspective. This perspective, which is

concerned centrally with aggregate levels of civic engagement, is used to explain variation in community violent crime rates. Drawing from recent research on social capital, civic engagement, and civil society, we argue that communities with a cultural orientation of civic participation will have lower crime rates, independent of the effects of structural factors such as concentrated disadvantage. Thus, rather than focusing solely on the poisonous character of community deficits, we expand our range of vision to include the protections afforded by an abundance of cultural resources—in this case, civic engagement.

Second, we distinguish between two main types of civic participation—namely, religious and secular forms of civic involvement. This is an important conceptual distinction to make given that the level of participation for each of these varies dramatically by age as well as across communities. What is more, sociologists have recently begun to draw important distinctions between the different forms of civic engagement yielded by high stocks of faith-based versus secular social capital (Ammerman, 1997; Bartkowski, Howell, & Lai, 2002; Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Bartkowski & Xu, 2002; Lee & Bartkowski, in press). Moreover, prior research suggests that faith-based social capital is fungible because religious adherents show themselves to be more active participants in the civic life of communities than their nonreligious counterparts (see Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Wuthnow, 1999). Although groups of community residents may accrue social networks and civic skills in one institution (e.g., by participation in a religious congregation), they may “spend” this social capital in a different context altogether (e.g., through secular volunteering). For all of these reasons, it is important to disaggregate religious participation from secular civic involvement when examining the relationship between civic engagement and violent crime.

Third, there is reason to believe that religious and secular forms of civic engagement yield variegated protections for different groups of people. Religious participation is a populist civic resource in that it is ostensibly available to all—young and old alike. In fact, religious organizations portray themselves as society’s most “family-friendly” institution. (Admittedly, many youngsters may not have much choice about their religious participation, as their parents might make choices about churchgoing

for them until their midteen years.) By contrast, some key forms of civic participation (e.g., voting) are available only to adults. The stabilizing effects for the community of high levels of secular civic participation may therefore have little import for the volume of crime committed by youth. Thus, in what follows, we develop a conceptual rationale for expecting that these two forms of civic participation will not have equivalent relationships with juvenile and adult homicide rates. In addressing these issues, we seek to challenge important assumptions implicit in much of the extant macro-level research on serious crime.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Perspectives on Crime

Social scientists have long been interested in cross-sectional macro-level variation in the prevalence of serious crime. From the early work of Shaw and McKay (1942) and Shaw, McKay, Zorbaugh, and Cottrell (1929) to the more recent strides made with the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (see Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), sociologists and criminologists have repeatedly tried to explain intercommunity variation in crime rates (see also Land, McCall, & Cohen, 1990; Parker, McCall, & Land, 1999, for summaries of much of this research). Although a good deal of this research is concerned with neighborhood-level processes, such as those identified by Shaw and his colleagues more than 70 years ago, a parallel line of research has emerged examining variation across other macro-level units of analysis, such as cities, counties, metropolitan areas, states, and countries.

Only a handful of theoretical perspectives have been advanced to explain the variations observed in this latter line of research. Scholars have typically classified these theories as either structural or cultural in nature. Perhaps most prominent in the structural tradition are the concentrated disadvantage and strain perspectives. The concentrated disadvantage perspective is evidenced most clearly in the works of Wilson (1987, 1996) and Massey and Denton (1993), all of whom are interested in

explaining the formation and maintenance of what is generically called the "urban underclass." This perspective generally attributes the high rate of violent crime observed in urban African American neighborhoods to the concentration of numerous forms of disadvantage such as poverty, unemployment, female-headed families, and other community deficits. Thus, these types of structural deficiencies are said to account for the crime proneness of local communities. The argument within this paradigm is that the spatial overlap of populations with these characteristics into a limited number of neighborhoods within cities socially isolates community members from mainstream middle-class institutions, opportunities, norms, and values, thereby opening the door for serious violations of the law. Recent research testing the concentrated disadvantage hypothesis provides relatively consistent support for this perspective (Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Lee, 2000), and it is notable that results from such studies typically report similar effects of concentrated disadvantage for Blacks and Whites.¹

In contrast to the concentrated disadvantage perspective, strain theorists have typically asserted that high crime rates across macro-level units are largely attributable to the presence of economic and social inequalities (see Blau & Blau, 1982; Williams & Flewelling, 1988). For example, some studies indicate that economic inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient is positively associated with crime rates (Kovandzic, Vieraitis, & Yeisley, 1998), whereas others indicate that racial disparities in socioeconomic achievement generate frustration and serve as an underlying source of serious crime (Blau & Golden, 1986). In this case, communities that lack social equality are shown to be more crime prone in character.

Although the concentrated disadvantage and strain perspectives are typically viewed as analytically separate, they have at least one important affinity: They both suggest crime rates are primarily driven by a process of normative breakdown due to deficits in the socialization functions of major social institutions. Whether citing social, familial, economic, religious, or political institutions, these major theories (and others) assume that the institutions so vital to maintaining social order and regulating group behavior patterns are, in one way or another, rendered ineffective. If adapted to integrate the language of social capital, these

theories reveal how the networks, norms, and trust usually engendered through institutional participation and attachment (i.e., aggregate social capital) are effectively weakened, thus causing crime rates to increase.

In contrast to the prominent structural theories, cultural theories have emerged to explain variations in community crime. Among the leading theories in this tradition are those that examine the aggregate perpetration of violent crimes across different regions of the country. Given the consistently higher rates of community-level violent crime in the South, the leading theory in this body of research is the Southern subculture of violence thesis (Blau & Golden, 1986; Dixon & Lizotte, 1987; Ellison, 1991; Kowalski & Petee, 1991; Nelson, Corzine, & Huff-Corzine, 1994; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). The macro-level version of this thesis asserts that community variation in crime rates is attributable to variations in cultural values and norms which are either supportive of violence or which at the very least do not constrain or prohibit violence. Consistent with the Old Testament maxim of "an eye for an eye," some have argued that the conservative religious culture of the South makes residents in this region of the country considerably more approving of violence, especially when it takes defensive and retaliatory forms (Ellison, 1991).

Recent years have witnessed calls to amend the Southern subculture of violence thesis in two noteworthy ways. First, a host of scholars have argued for an integration of structural and cultural factors in explaining regional variations in violent crime—particularly homicide (see Dixon & Lizotte, 1987, as well as commentary and debate by Corzine & Huff-Corzine, 1989; Dixon & Lizotte, 1989; Ellison & McCall, 1989). Thus, there has been an emphasis on broadening the subculture of violence thesis to include structural factors that it initially downplayed. Second, although analysts have historically focused on a Southern subculture of violence (Gastil, 1971; Hackney, 1969), more recent research has argued that the South and the West have largely converged in their rates of homicide (Kowalski & Petee, 1991; Nelsen et al., 1994; Parker & Pruitt, 2000). Regardless of the trend toward convergence, the literature does strongly suggest that regional subcultures may exert an influence on homicide rates, independent of many of the widely cited structural factors noted above.

Age, Macro-Level Theory, and Crime

A second concern of sociologists is the disparity in criminal participation between youth and adults. Analysts have demonstrated time and again that juveniles are responsible for a disproportionate volume of serious crime. Why this is the case continues to perplex researchers. At the individual level, delinquent and criminal youth are usually considered to lack self-control or self-esteem, or to learn the behavior through association, imitation, reinforcement, or any other of a host of factors. Individual-level theories are therefore quite able to explain age differences in criminal offending. Macro-level analysis, however, presents unique problems concerning age-based variations in crime.

The most fundamental problem is that most macro-level theories describe generic processes underlying elevated crime rates. Analysts then typically assume that these crime-inducing forces exert the same degree of pressure on all segments of the population. Taken at face value, this assumption appears to be patently false. To illustrate, consider strain theory and the problem of economic inequality. Mertonian strain theory (Merton, 1938) asserts that a disjuncture between goals and means generates frustration and ultimately innovation in the form of instrumental crime. The goals are cultural in nature and include a valorization of status and wealth. The theory says that when the culturally prescribed goals are not widely accessible, as is the case when there is a high degree of economic or social inequality, anomie is endemic to the social group. The problem here is that because youth are typically economically dependent on parents or guardians, there is little reason to expect that they would experience the direct anomic pressures assumed to drive (adult) crimes associated with economic inequality.

The concentrated disadvantage perspective fares somewhat better but still fails to provide a compelling rationale. With its focus on informal social control, the concentrated disadvantage perspective asserts that structural characteristics such as a prevalence of female-headed households and high levels of poverty or unemployment reduce the ability of mainstream social institutions (such as the family and workplace) to socialize people—especially youngsters—effectively. Empirical support for this perspective is relatively consistent, especially with respect to the role of family disruption in generating juvenile violence at the

macro level (see Sampson, 1987; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994). However, field research such as that by Anderson (1999) clearly indicates that a preponderance of people living in areas characterized by high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage are from "decent families" that still adhere to mainstream norms and values and do not advocate the use of violence. Hence, even in the face of concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage, the overwhelming majority of adults are still law abiding, as are most children. And many children of decent families that get caught up in the community cycle of violence do so because knowledge about the "code of the street" is necessary to navigate their way successfully through the social landscape. In summary, the problem confronting the concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage perspective in terms of its relationship to age and crime may be construed as opposite of that faced by Mertonian strain theory. It appears to have explanatory efficacy for juveniles but not necessarily adults.

Interestingly, the argument can be made that cultural explanations face similar problems. For example, if there are cultural orientations driving crime rates in the South or West, it is not clear that these factors would be as important for juveniles as for adults. There are both conceptual reasons and prior empirical research to support posing this question. On the conceptual side, subcultural orientations toward violence may be passed down from generation to generation (especially from father to son), but it is likely that a broad cultural tolerance for violence is less salient for juveniles than it is for adults. This is because it takes a while for young people to be socialized into dominant cultural orientations, and their assumption of cultural norms and roles does not get fully acted out until they enter postadolescent maturity. On the empirical side, measures of region typically are not significantly associated with macro-level variation in juvenile crime rates, but they are with adult crime rates (Sampson, 1987; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994).

In summary, the main problem we extract from prior research is the assumption that both structural factors and cultural factors have the same influence on community levels of adult and juvenile crime. Existing perspectives generally are not age specific, despite compelling conceptual reasons to articulate age-graded conceptual models. In addition, the limited empirical literature that is available generally supports the notion that variables com-

monly employed in macro-level analyses of crime do not have equal influences on adult and juvenile crime.

Beyond Deficit Models: Civic Participation as a Community Resource Against Crime

To address these issues, we advocate a civic participation perspective on crime. The defining features of our conceptual model, which we call a community resource perspective, are as follows. First, a civic participation perspective focuses not on the crime-inducing features of the social structure but rather on its crime-depressing features. In other words, our focus is not on poisonous community deficits so commonly associated with high crime rates but rather on community resources that may provide a protective buffer against criminal activity. Second, we take into account two distinct yet complementary forms of civic participation—religious, on the one hand, and secular, on the other hand. Although rates of both religious participation and secular civic engagement contribute to the community resource base in terms of enhancing social networks, norms, and trust (aggregate social capital), it is also the case that there are dramatic variations across communities in the level of participation by local residents in each of these forms of civic involvement. It is also notable that there are dramatic regional variations as well, most evident for example in the Bible Belt of the Southeastern and mid-South United States—the very same part of the nation allegedly harboring a subculture of violence. Third, our civic participation perspective strongly suggests that the efficacy of religious versus secular participation in depressing violent crime rates will vary for juveniles and adults. Hence, a primary advantage of this perspective is that it explicitly suggests that the protective effects afforded by the community resource base through religious and secular civic participation will vary for juveniles and adults. And as noted above, this is a particularly challenging problem for the major extant theories. Below we explicate these points more thoroughly.

Theoretical Links Between Civic Participation and Crime

Most existing macro-level theories of crime suggest either directly or indirectly that civic participation is associated with

low community crime rates. For example, in their benchmark study testing social disorganization theory, Sampson and Groves (1989) argued that associational participation and the breadth of social networks is a key factor intervening between structural factors such as low socioeconomic status and crime. Messner and Rosenfeld's (1994) institutional anomie theory also states that a major cause of crime in the United States is ostensibly the compromised functioning of major social institutions such as religion and the polity. Although differing in their causal mechanisms, these and other macro-level theories are generally consonant in their assumption that high crime rates are the product of a breakdown in the ability of social institutions to effectively socialize and control the behavior of community residents.

There are several reasons to believe that civic participation enhances both socialization and social control. First, it is widely assumed that civic participation provides a forum through which mainstream middle-class norms that do not condone violence, and more generally crime, are transmitted. The importance of normative transmission is particularly pronounced among the most disenfranchised segments of the population. Wilson (1996) reported that many parents confined to deteriorated urban neighborhoods do whatever they can to get their children involved in churches and other social and civic institutions in order to socialize them into a "decent" normative orientation (see also Anderson, 1999). Such parents aspire to have their children socialized into a normative orientation other than that found in the mean streets of the ghetto where the risk of getting involved in illegal and potentially lethal activities (such as drug markets) is extremely high. The middle and upper classes of American society place a similar emphasis on civic participation for their children, and in fact recent reports suggest that the competition for college entrance has become so intense that many parents are overloading their children with such activities.

In addition to the idea of normative socialization, civic participation may enhance social networks and the degree of trust found in communities. The recent theoretical work on social capital conducted by Putnam (2000) and others asserts that social networks and trust are complementary components of social capital (along with norms). Most important, this work suggests that the resources existing in the structure of relations among people

enable them not only to maintain a vibrant civic life but also to avert and redress social problems. Social capital is engendered through civic participation (e.g., volunteering, political engagement) because such participation builds networks of exchange based on mutual obligation and reciprocity (in a word, trust). For Putnam and others, civic participation is reflective of aggregate levels of social capital. Prior research weighs in on both of these factors as they relate to crime. For example, ecological research examining the associations between social networks and crime typically reports an inverse relationship at the community level (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Additionally, qualitative research demonstrates that the social milieu in disenfranchised communities is characterized by a lack of trust in others (Anderson, 1999). The evidence from these studies is augmented by the findings of Rosenfeld, Messner, and Baumer (2001), who developed an aggregate measure of social capital and found that it has a strong inverse relationship with rates of homicide across macro-level units of analysis.

A final, more pragmatic factor relating civic participation to low crime rates relates to time allocation, supervision, and opportunities to commit crime. The opportunity perspective in criminology asserts that crime rates are largely a function of the degree of guardianship and supervision to which people are subject, as well as how they spend their time (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garafolo, 1978). In communities where civic participation is high, residents on average will spend more time under the supervision of presumably law-abiding friends and acquaintances. And because opportunity theory states that criminal activity is likely to occur with a greater frequency where people spend more time unsupervised, civic participation may also be associated with reduced crime rates because of enhanced guardianship, especially for young people.

Open Versus Closed Civic Resources: Religious Involvement, Secular Participation, and Age-Graded Community Outcomes

As we noted at the outset, our study compares the protective effects associated with two key types of community involvement—namely, religious versus secular civic participation. Hence, this investigation extends previous work in which we

have examined the prosocial outcomes connected with religious and secular stocks of social capital across various community contexts. However, in what follows, we explore a new avenue for research on the character and effects of civic engagement in American communities. To wit, we argue that more careful attention needs to be given to the age-specific character of social capital and to the community effects that might be derived from the interplay between age and these two types of civic engagement (secular vs. religious). Unfortunately, the volumes of research currently produced on social capital and civic engagement generally overlook the age-specific effects of social capital and largely fail to draw careful distinctions between religious and nonreligious types of civic engagement. Yet we believe that the benefits for young people and their older counterparts may vary with regard to each of these different types of civic participation.

In pursuing this line of research, we seek to assess and extend one of the key findings articulated in Putnam's (2000) popular treatise, *Bowling Alone*. In one of the most important chapters in this tome ("From Generation to Generation"), Putnam concedes the importance of age in the accrual of social capital:

Age is second only to education as a predictor of virtually all forms of civic engagement, and trends in civic engagement are *not* uniform across all age categories. Middle-aged and older people are more active in more organizations than younger people, attend church more often, vote more regularly, both read and watch the news more frequently, are less misanthropic and more philanthropic, are more interested in politics, work on more community projects, and volunteer more. (pp. 247-248)

Yet despite this nod toward the importance of age in civic participation, Putnam (2000) goes on to conclude that variations in age-based civic engagement are not an effect of age per se, but rather are a product of generational differences: "In short, the decades that have seen a national deterioration in social capital are the very decades during which the numerical dominance of an exceptionally civic generation was replaced by the dominion of 'postcivic' cohorts" (p. 256). Putnam refers to this generational phenomenon as the "graying of civic America" (p. 256).

In our view, however, these should not be the last words on the subject of age-specific variations in civic participation and social

capital. Although age-based variations in overall social-capital stocks are undoubtedly pronounced (and may indeed be connected to generational changes), it is also possible that different types of social capital (religious vs. secular) may have age-specific outcomes that are not reducible to period or cohort effects. As Putnam (2000) makes clear, patterns of civic engagement differ when the young (by which he means young adults) are compared to their elders. Yet it is quite obvious that by virtue of their age, young people who have not yet reached adulthood lack access to certain forms of civic participation (e.g., voting). They are also unlikely to have developed the extensive set of associational ties (labor union or professional association memberships) in which adults can participate as they launch their careers. The social capital generated by these activities and associations is best understood as a "closed" civic resource. These particular stocks of social capital are available only to adult constituencies. Moreover, because these civic resources are closed, the enhancement of community-level socialization processes and social cohesion may be particularly pronounced for adults but should have little import for juveniles.

At the same time, those members of the population younger than 18 years old have ready access to other forms of civic engagement, such as participation in sports leagues, school clubs, and (quite notably, where our study is concerned) church youth groups. These civic resources are "open" in the sense that they provide social capital to youth (their primary constituency) and adults (who function as coaches, mentors, teachers, and youth ministers in supervising activities of the young, often in combination with parents of participating youth). When considered on an aggregate level, a closed civic resource such as voting is likely to produce age-specific benefits for adult constituencies in a community, whereas an open civic resource such as religious participation could be expected to provide protections against aversive community outcomes for both young people and adults, again because of the socialization and social-integration functions open civic resources provide.

By all estimates, the most crucial open civic resource for American young people is religious youth groups. Recent data reveal that about 1 in 5 twelfth graders is actively involved in church youth activities (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994;

see also Smith & Faris, 2002). Strikingly, this figure is more than twice the proportion of adolescents who participate in nonreligious youth groups (e.g., boys and girls clubs, school clubs). More than half (56%) of high school seniors report ever having participated in a church youth group; and 24% of young people report having been involved with religious youth groups for 4 or more years (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1995). In short, long-term participation in church youth programs far eclipses teen involvement in extracurricular activities, secular youth clubs, and young people's community organizations.

When compared with youth involvement in secular activities, these high rates of religious involvement among youth may spring from both supply factors (the availability of churches in an area) and demand influences (the desire that youth or their parents exhibit for such programs). Regardless of its cause, this evidence leads us to suspect that careful attention must be given to the interplay of age and the specific protections provided by particular types of civic participation (religious vs. secular). Hence, we suggest that sustained attention must be given to not just civic participation writ large but to different types of civic participation—that is, religious versus secular forms of civic involvement. Moreover, given that open civic resources should contribute to the socialization and integration of almost all community members, whereas closed civic resources should have beneficial effects for more limited segments of the population, it is feasible to delineate age-graded expectations. Drawing from this conceptual model, we expect that juvenile homicide rates will be lower in communities marked by robust levels of religious participation, but that secular civic engagement will not yield these same protections for those younger than 18 years of age. By contrast, we expect that adult homicide will be inversely associated with both religious participation (an open civic resource) and secular civic engagement in the form of voting (a closed, adult-only civic resource). In short, the homicide-depressing effects of religious participation rates should be more far reaching, as they are expected to cut across the adult-juvenile age categories.

We note here that our model is a community-level perspective and not a micro-level perspective that is used to draw out macro-level hypotheses. We do not suggest that because young people are blocked from participating in some secular forms of civic

participation such as voting that they will commit crime. Rather, we argue that communities having greater stocks of secular civic participation will have lower overall volumes of adult crime because the social control functions generated by closed civic resources are in this case largely expected to be age-specific, whereas this is not necessarily the case with open civic resources such as religious civic participation.

DATA AND METHOD

We test our conceptual framework with cross-sectional county-level data drawn from various sources (detailed below) centered on 1990. We employ U.S. counties as the analytical unit for several reasons. First, counties are widely employed in macro-level research on crime (see Baller, Anselin, Messner, Deane, & Hawkins, 2001; Kposowa & Breault, 1993; Kposowa, Breault, & Harrison, 1995; Petee & Kowalski, 1993), on stratification (Lyson & Tolbert, 1996; Tolbert, Lyson, & Irwin, 1998), and on other social phenomena. Second, to operationalize our conceptual indicators of civic participation (detailed below), we require unique aggregate data that are available at the county level but that are not consistently available for other units of analysis such as central cities. Third, the use of counties allows us the somewhat unusual advantage of data covering almost the entire population of the United States, as opposed to relying on a sample with arbitrarily defined scope conditions.²

Finally, we agree with the benchmark work of Land et al. (1990) who suggested that there are no strong theoretical reasons to expect macro-level theory to hold explanatory power for some units of analysis but not others, making the selection of analytical units somewhat arbitrary (see also Parker et al., 1999).

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables employed in the following analyses are juvenile (defined as those younger than age 18) and adult (defined as those 18 years of age and older) homicide offense rates. These measures are derived from the incident level detail files of the *Supplementary Homicide Reports*, aggregated to the

county level (Fox, 2000). Consistent with prior research, we select only those homicides having a single offender and single victim (Williams & Flewelling, 1988) because such incidents account for the large majority of all homicides and because incidents with multiple offenders and/or victims may be sufficiently unique to require separate theorizing. Because homicide is a rare event, and yearly rates may be unduly influenced by random fluctuations, we smooth our data by taking a 3-year average of the number of homicides for 1990 to 1992, holding closely to convention in the literature. The *Supplementary Homicide Reports* data are missing some data on the characteristics of offenders. Hence, we follow convention in the literature and utilize a standard missing data algorithm to impute the characteristics of the unknown cases based on the distribution of known cases (Fox & Zawitz, 2001).

Key Indicators of Civic Participation

Our indicators of civic participation are derived from several data sources. To capture the actual prevalence of religious civic participation, we employ a measure of religious civic engagement operationalized as the proportion adhering to religious denominations identified as civically engaged. We employ the same method as Tolbert et al. (1998) for distinguishing civically engaged denominations from all others (p. 424).³

The data for this measure come from the *Census of Churches and Church Membership, 1990* (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 1992). Our second main indicator of religious civic participation is designed to tap not actual participation but potential participation through the degree of access local residents have to religious institutions. To secure this measure, we draw data from the *Census of Churches and Church Membership, 1990* on the number of churches in each county and calculate a measure of church access as the number of churches per 100,000 people in the county. Our measures of secular civic participation are similarly designed to capture both actual and potential participation. Hence, we employ a measure of average voter turnout for the 1988 and 1992 presidential elections and the number of social and civic organizations per 100,000 people in the population. The former measure is calculated as the averaged proportion of the estimated eligible population turning out to vote for each election

and is drawn from a U.S. counties data archive (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). The data for the latter measure are derived from the economic census on county business patterns for 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Control Variables

Prior research on macro-level homicide rates provides direction with respect to important control variables as well. A great deal of research suggests that socioeconomic disadvantage is a driving force behind homicide rates (Land et al., 1990; Ousey, 1999). Several measures of disadvantage are prevalent in the literature, such as the proportion living in poverty, the proportion unemployed, the presence of female-headed households, and the like. More recently, however, some analysts—drawing primarily on the work of Wilson (1987, 1996) and Massey and Denton (1993)—have argued that spatially concentrated poverty may be the primary culprit driving violent crime rates (see Krivo & Peterson, 2000; Lee, 2000). Hence, we select as our primary indicator of concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage a measure of poverty concentration derived from the well-known P^* index of social isolation (see Bell, 1954). This measure taps the likelihood of randomly drawing a poor person from a block group within the county and then randomly drawing a second person from that block group who is also poor. We view this measure as conceptually superior to measures collapsing several different dimensions of socioeconomic disadvantage into a single index, as is common in a great deal of prior research. In our extensive sensitivity analyses presented below, we also introduce several other measures of socioeconomic disadvantage but delay discussion of those variables until later in the article.

We control for the presence of racial heterogeneity with a measure of the proportion of the population that is Black (proportion Black). Because the size of the population at risk for homicide is consistently related to homicide rates, we control for the size of the juvenile and adult populations in their respective models. Additionally, because a large segment of the population in the crime-prone age group (15 to 29) may be associated with high homicide rates, we construct a measure of the proportion of the population in this age range (age 15 to 29). Divorce rates are

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for Selected Variables, 3,099 Counties

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Churches per 100,000	239.41	140.61
Civically engaged religious adherents	.28	.17
Average voter turnout from 1988 to 1992	.57	.11
Social and civic organizations per 100,000	17.31	17.90

consistently found to share a positive association with homicide rates. Consequently, we control for this possibly confounding factor (proportion divorced). Finally, because debate continues about the importance of regional variations in the prevalence of homicide, we include dichotomous controls for counties in the Southern region (South) and the Western region (West). Each of these variables is drawn from Summary Tape File 3C of the 1990 Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). With missing data for some of our measures, the final sample size employed in the following analyses is 3,099 counties and county equivalents in the United States.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for our key independent variables. Focusing first on actual levels of civic participation, the measure of civically engaged religious adherents reveals that 28% of county residents, on average, in this sample adhere to denominations identified as civically engaged. Additionally, the average voter turnout was 57%. However, the standard deviations for these measures confirm that there is a great deal of variation across counties in each of these forms of civic participation. Turning next to the measures of potential civic participation, there is an average of 239.41 churches per 100,000 people in this sample, but as the standard deviation statistic suggests, there is tremendous variation in the availability of such institutions across counties. Finally, there are, on average, 17.31 social and civic organizations per 100,000 people, with a similar standard deviation.

Our conceptual framework partitions civic participation into religious and secular forms. As delineated above, we have two indicators for each form, tapping both actual civic participation and its important corollary, potential civic participation. Because of their conceptual distinctions, and because these variables demonstrated covariance with one another according to the bivariate

TABLE 2
Oblique Rotation Principal Components Factor Pattern Matrices for
Institutional Access and Civic Engagement Items

	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>
Churches per 100,000	.741	
Civically engaged religious adherents	.607	
Average voter turnout 1988 to 1992		.842
Social and civic organizations per 100,000		.604
Eigenvalue	1.264	1.063
Variance explained	31.60%	26.58%

correlations, we conducted an obliquely rotated principal components analysis to reduce potential multicollinearity problems and to capture the latent constructs of religious and secular participation. The results from this analysis are presented in Table 2. As expected, according to the pattern matrices presented in this table, the measures of churches per capita and religiously based civic engagement load highly on the first factor, which we term religious civic participation. High values on this factor reflect a large number of churches per 100,000 people and a large proportion of the population adhering to civically engaged religious denominations. Conversely, low values on this factor reflect a small number of churches available to the population and a low proportion of the population adhering to civically engaged denominations. On the second factor, the measures of average voter turnout and social and civic organizations load together, comprising a factor that we term secular civic engagement. Like the prior factor, high values indicate widespread voter turnout and relatively widespread access to social and civic organizations, whereas low values are indicative of the opposite.

Analytical Technique

Because homicide is a statistically rare event, the data for our dependent variables of juvenile and adult homicide are essentially discretely and nonnormally distributed. This is often the case with rare events such as homicide or with data that are based on a small population size. When this is the case, ordinary least squares regression is typically not appropriate for testing multivariate relationships because error terms are unevenly distributed (heteroscedasticity), biasing estimated standard errors and

hence significance tests. Recently, Osgood (2000) made a compelling case to employ Poisson-based estimation techniques, which are designed to account for the nonnormal and rare distribution of some dependent variables and therefore provide a more reliable estimation strategy. Although Poisson estimation is usually implemented when analyzing counts of some outcome, it can also be used to analyze rates by specifying as an offset variable the natural log of the population size. This constrains the population for each county to one, and allows the independent variables to then predict the rate of juvenile or adult homicide. This strategy is appropriate for our data. Thus, in models below, we regress juvenile and adult homicide rates on our vector of independent variables. However, our preliminary analyses indicated that the restrictive assumption of the basic Poisson model—that the mean and variance be equal—was violated with our data, and so we employ the negative binomial variant of the basic Poisson estimator, which allows for the inclusion of a disturbance term to capture this overdispersion of the dependent variables.

Multicollinearity, where two or more independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, is one of the most prevalent and serious problems confronted when examining macro-level data. The problems introduced by multicollinearity are well known and include biased significance tests (see Land et al., 1990). To probe for this potential problem, we conducted extensive auxiliary analyses for all of the models presented below. These diagnostics, which included reexamining all models with an OLS estimator to secure variance inflation factors, indicate that multicollinearity is not a problem in these data. For example, Allison (1999) suggested that variance inflation factors in excess of 2.5 should be taken as a potential indicator of multicollinearity. This threshold is generally considered an extremely conservative criterion. For the models reported below, all variance inflation factors were less than 2.0, suggesting that collinearity is not a problem in these models.

RESULTS

Table 3 presents the results of our negative binomial regression models predicting juvenile homicide rates. Model 1 presents the

TABLE 3
Negative Binomial Regression Models Predicting
Juvenile Homicide Rate, 3,099 U.S. Counties

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Religious civic participation	—	—	-.274*	.113
Secular civic participation	—	—	.191	.109
Juvenile population size	.650**	.052	.599**	.055
Divorce rate	14.963**	3.114	13.889**	3.129
Aged 15 to 29	1.773	1.544	1.965	1.565
Percentage Black	4.090**	.398	4.236**	.406
Concentrated poverty	4.545**	.671	4.240**	.675
South	-.062	.133	.017	.142
West	-.052	.156	.041	.163
Pseudo R^2	.26		.27	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

results for the baseline specification utilizing our series of control variables, whereas Model 2 incorporates into the baseline specification our theoretical factors—namely, religious and secular civic participation. Taking first the results of Model 1, we find that four of the seven control variables have statistically significant relationships with the juvenile homicide rate, and of these, all are in the expected direction. In terms of interpreting these effects, the coefficient for concentrated poverty indicates that a 1-percentage-point change in the level of concentrated poverty is associated with a 4.65% increase in the rate of juvenile homicide.⁴ In other words, with a 10-percentage-point increase in the level of concentrated poverty, or nearly one half of the mean, there is a 46.5% change in the juvenile homicide rate. Similarly, a 1% increase in the proportion of the population that is Black is associated with a 4.17% increase in the juvenile homicide rate. The measure of divorce also performs as expected, with a 1-unit increase associated with a 16% increase in the rate of juvenile homicide. Finally, the insignificant variables indicate that juvenile homicide rates in Southern and Western counties are not significantly different from those in other regions of the country once the other variables in the model are set to their mean level and that county-level juvenile homicide rates are not driven by the age structure of the population.

Model 2 consolidates the baseline model with our measures of civic participation. The results of this model provide rather clear support for the hypothesis delineated above stating that juvenile homicide rates should partially be an inverse function of the degree of religious civic participation but unaffected by the degree of secular participation. For example, interpreting the negative coefficient for religious civic participation of $-.274$ based on its standard deviation (because it is a principal components factor with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one), a standard deviation increase of one in the level of religiously based civic participation is associated with a 24% decline in the rate of juvenile homicide. In other words, as the level of actual and potential religious civic engagement increases, the juvenile homicide rate on average declines. In contrast, the coefficient for secular civic participation is not significantly different from zero in these data, indicating that there is no relationship between secular civic participation and juvenile homicide rates that is not attributable to chance.

Table 4 reports the results of the same models as Table 3, except in this table the models predict the adult homicide rate. The findings for Model 1 are similar to those reported for juveniles. For example, using the same method employed above to interpret the coefficients, a 1% increase in the level of poverty concentration corresponds to a 3.62% increase in the adult homicide rate. Hence, concentrated disadvantage appears to create an upward pressure on both juvenile and adult homicide rates, although the effect is slightly stronger for juveniles. Notably, this is consonant with our discussion above, which argued that the presence of concentrated disadvantage might undermine the socialization and social control of youth in particular. The effects of the divorce rate and the proportion of the population that is Black are also weaker for adults than juveniles in this model. The main departure here from the juvenile model in the previous table can be stated as follows: whereas homicide rates are higher, on average, in Southern and Western counties than in other parts of the country for adults, such was not the case for juveniles. In addition, although the age structure shared no relationship with the juvenile homicide rate, it has a negative relationship with the adult homicide rate. Although at face value this may seem counterintuitive, the explanation for this unexpected finding may be that many adult homi-

TABLE 4
Negative Binomial Regression Models Predicting
Adult Homicide Rate, 3,099 U.S. Counties

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Religious civic participation	—	—	-.152**	.037
Secular civic participation	—	—	-.270**	.040
Adult population size	.279**	.019	.234**	.021
Divorce rate	7.186**	1.395	7.730**	1.366
Aged 15 to 29	-1.986**	.611	-3.314**	.627
Percentage Black	2.432**	.170	2.273**	.167
Concentrated poverty	3.553**	.278	3.632**	.273
South	.642**	.056	.431**	.061
West	.441**	.071	.304**	.072
Pseudo R^2	.15		.16	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

cides occur between people who are in a relationship with each other or who know each other. But our measure of the age structure captures that segment of the population that is more likely to engage in homicides involving strangers. We do not suggest that the age structure measure is a proxy for the type of relationship among homicide victims and offenders. Rather, we surmise that when there is a large proportion of the population between the ages of 15 and 29, there may be a smaller segment of the population attached through intimate relationships. Gross levels of homicide-inducing detachment among the relatively young would stand in contrast to adult homicides, which often occur among intimates and the well acquainted.

Model 2 in Table 4 follows the same logic as the models in the prior table, where the measures of religious and secular civic participation are added to the regression equation. Both variables are negative and statistically significant predictors of the adult homicide rate. Accounting again for the fact that these variables are measured as principal components factors with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one, the coefficient of $-.152$ for the religious civic participation factor indicates that a standard deviation increase of one in the level of religious civic participation is associated with a 14.10% decline in the adult homicide rate. Similarly, the coefficient for secular civic participation, which is slightly stronger, suggests that a standard deviation increase of

one in the level of secular civic participation is associated with a 23.66% average decrease in the adult homicide rate. These findings are consonant with our conceptual model delineated above that suggested that if civic participation is associated with lower crime rates, both religious and secular participation should be associated with declines in adult homicide rates due to the level of participation exhibited by adults in both dimensions of civic participation and hence, the extent of socialization and social control to which adults are subjected. A final notable aspect of this model is that the coefficients for the regional measures decline by about one third when the measures of religious and secular participation are included in the models, a point to which we return below.

Because of the age-graded effects of religious and civic participation on adult and juvenile homicide rates, it is prudent to conduct additional analyses to probe for potential problems related to omitted variable bias or sample composition. Therefore, we examined a series of auxiliary models, some of which are presented in Table 5. In this table, the coefficients for the religious and secular factors are presented for both juveniles and adults under various alternative model specifications.⁵

For example, in the first row, the coefficients for our theoretical measures are presented when the models are reestimated with the addition of a control for the proportion of households in the county that are female headed. Numerous studies have clearly documented the strong relationship between female-headed households and crime rates (see Sampson, 1987; Shihadeh & Steffensmeier, 1994), but the inclusion of this variable does little to alter the effects of the theoretical measures of civic participation. The same conclusion holds when measures of the proportion of the population in the labor force that is unemployed and the proportion of those 25 years and older who are high school dropouts are rotated into the model. In sum, adding alternative measures of socioeconomic disadvantage does not account for the observed relationships between civic participation and age-specific homicide rates.

Some research also documents variation across the rural-urban continuum in average crime rates, whereas many studies from Shaw and McKay forward have argued that the rate of population turnover will contribute to the deterioration of informal social-

control mechanisms. The next two models therefore include a dummy variable coded 1 for counties that are adjacent to urban counties and zero otherwise and a measure of the proportion of residents who have moved in the past 5 years. Although conceptually interesting in their own right, neither of these measures account for the associations between civic participation and crime rates.

The next two models introduce additional variables to account for the overall level of socioeconomic well-being within counties by introducing measures of median income and the proportion of the population receiving public assistance. There is some evidence to suggest that more affluent areas have higher levels of civic participation, and it is possible that these two measures would account for the observed relationships between religious and secular civic participation and homicide rates. However, these models indicate that the effects of the theoretical variables are retained even when these two measures are controlled. Additionally, several studies report a positive relationship between the level of race-based residential segregation and crime rates, arguing that residential segregation is an ascriptive form of inequality that has particularly deleterious consequences for social organization in Black communities. One consequence is that urban African American populations that are highly segregated from Whites are also highly segregated from mainstream institutional structures that may serve as a forum for civic participation. However, even with the inclusion of this measure, the influence of the civic participation variables remained unchanged.

Finally, we probe for sample composition effects by omitting all counties with a population of less than 10,000 people to make sure that the inclusion of a large number of sample units with a zero homicide rate does not influence the results. However, the civic participation measures retain their observed effects. The opposite may also be the case, in the sense that our results may also be driven by the inclusion of the largest cities in the country. Because homicide rates are largely a function of population size, we omit all counties with a population greater than 1 million people. Nevertheless, this final model indicates that even with the reduced sample, juvenile homicide rates are lower where there are higher levels of religious civic participation, whereas adult homicide

TABLE 5
Sensitivity Analyses: Alternative Model Specifications for Juvenile and Adult Homicide Rates

	Juveniles				Adults			
	Religious Factor		Secular Factor		Religious Factor		Secular Factor	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Controlling for:								
Female-headed households	-.270*	.116	.197	.116	-.137**	.038	-.255**	.040
Unemployment	-.298*	.118	.168	.113	-.153**	.037	-.272**	.040
High school dropouts	-.267*	.119	.201	.113	-.122**	.037	-.136**	.045
Adjacent to urban areas	-.252*	.112	.165	.109	-.152**	.037	-.272**	.040
Population turnover	-.277*	.112	.185	.109	-.180**	.037	-.259**	.039
Median income	-.275*	.113	.178	.110	-.162**	.037	-.267**	.040
Public assistance	-.282*	.115	.179	.114	-.149**	.037	-.259**	.042
Dissimilarity	-.279*	.111	.144	.111	-.150**	.037	-.261**	.040
Counties > 10,000	-.261*	.113	.187	.110	-.136**	.038	-.262**	.040
Counties < 1,000,000	-.234*	.117	.134	.118	-.144**	.038	-.281**	.041

NOTE: Each model includes controls for the size of the relevant population at risk, the divorce rate, the proportion aged 15 to 29, poverty concentration, the proportion Black, and indicator variables for the Southern and Western regions.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

rates are lower where there is a greater prevalence of both religious and secular civic participation. In summary, these additional models provide another basis of support for our hypotheses.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has synthesized a number of disparate research literatures to illuminate age-graded homicide. We began by reviewing research that highlighted distinctive patterns in adult versus juvenile homicide and by arguing that extant theories generally approach the problem from one of two deficit perspectives—structural deficits (concentrated disadvantage, institutionalized strain) or cultural deficits (subculture of violence). This article reflects an attempt to synthesize the best parts of these theories while overcoming their most significant weaknesses. We have argued here for a community resource perspective on serious crime that is attuned to the advantages and protections afforded to communities with a vibrant civic infrastructure. Communities with high levels of voluntary participation create a civic infrastructure that is characterized by durable social networks, normative consensus, and a social climate in which trust can flourish. Our focus on community resources does not ignore the structural deficiencies in crime-prone localities (e.g., concentrated disadvantage, strain). Yet at the same time, a community resource perspective remains sensitive to the structural characteristics (e.g., the presence of secular service organizations, civically engaged religious congregations) and the cultural milieu (e.g., an ethic of volunteering, norms of reciprocal obligation) that make violence a rare occurrence within such communities.

In this sense, a community resource perspective can bridge the divide that commonly separates structural theories of crime from their cultural counterparts. On the one hand, this perspective highlights the significance of grassroots social and religious networks as structural avenues for civic participation. It is the presence of such organizations on the local scene that make community-service work and volunteering so widely available to residents in communities with a robust civic infrastructure. Yet this acknowledgment of the importance of civic infrastructure does

not lead us to ignore the cultural aspects of civic participation. Two cultural components of this perspective bear some elaboration here.

First, we have shown that it is important to distinguish between two different types of civic participation—namely, religious and secular forms of civic engagement. We have argued that religion is an open civic resource because it is widely available to community members regardless of age, whereas the primary secular form of community participation analyzed here (i.e., voting) is a closed civic resource available only to adults. Given the obvious differences between religious versus secular normative orientations and the age-graded character of civic opportunities, we suspected that the cultural resources created by these two different forms of civic participation would yield distinctive effects for juvenile versus adult homicide. This hypothesis was strongly confirmed in our analysis. Overall, we found that whereas aggregate levels of faith-based civic engagement predict lower rates of both adult and juvenile homicide, secular forms of civic engagement exert a pronounced depressing effect only on adult homicide.

At first blush, this finding seems quite straightforward. Stocks of social capital generated through adult forms of civic engagement (e.g., voting) seem to yield benefits for adults rather than for juveniles. Yet this finding should not be dismissed as trivial or obvious. Given portrayals of social capital as the lifeblood of communities, it seems reasonable to expect that some of the benefits derived from adults' civic participation might "trickle down" to youth. Yet where secular civic engagement and county-level homicide are concerned, no trickle-down effect manifests itself. We explained this finding by highlighting the circumscribed protections associated with closed civic resources, which may engender higher levels of normative integration among limited segments of the population. However, the protective effects yielded by religious forms of civic engagement apply to both adult and juvenile homicide because open civic resources have broader implications for the community. Given these distinct effects across ages and types of civic participation, our study suggests that religious forms of civic engagement offer protections against violent crime that are more far reaching in character than their secular counterparts. The community-level protections

against violent crime derived from a civically engaged religious infrastructure cut across age groups. By contrast, secular forms of civic participation offer more narrow protections, being associated only with lower community levels of adult homicide.

This finding of age-specific effects for different forms of civic engagement may be an important nuance overlooked by some claims about the civic power of aggregate stocks of social capital. Social capital may be the lifeblood of American communities, but the flow of this lifeblood to different sectors of any local community and the benefits it provides vary considerably. Typically, perspectives that paint social capital as the key to restoring civic life and averting community crime in America fail to specify the type of social capital in question (secular vs. religious) and overlook the fact that some groups (adults vs. youth) might derive a disproportionate benefit from increased stocks of a particular type of social capital. Our study clearly highlights the need for more careful theorizing about the crime-depressing effects of particular civic resources for specific groups of people.

In this same spirit, we hasten to add that some caution is warranted in interpreting this finding. Given the lack of county-level data on secular civic engagement among juveniles (e.g., presence of school clubs, community sports leagues, boys/girls clubs), additional research is needed to estimate the crime-depressing effects of secular civic engagement among juveniles across locales. We are aware of the existence of no such data at this time. However, if such data were to become available, the next step in this line of research would entail examining how young people's civic participation influences juvenile homicide rates at the county level. Ideally, such data might be compared with the local presence of church youth groups to determine if secular or religious forms of civic engagement exert an influence on juvenile homicide. Again, however, data limitations make such an avenue of research most difficult to pursue at this time.

Despite this limitation in our study, we still are intrigued by the fact that secular civic participation yields no discernible protection against juvenile homicide. Although it might seem reasonable to expect that youth would benefit from living in communities where adults are civically engaged, our analysis of juvenile homicide provides no support for this view. Thus, where age-graded homicide is concerned, a civic infrastructure that is

religious in character seems to cast a broader net of protections against community-level violent crime than secular forms of social capital.

Cultural factors related to violent crime have been integrated into this study in a second way as well. Our analyses examined regional differences in county-level homicide rates. Here again, a series of intriguing findings surfaced. First, consistent with research on regional subcultures of violence in America, we found that adult homicide was more prevalent in the South as well as in the West. Although scholarship on regional subcultures of violence has already made us aware of this fact, of greatest interest to us here is the significant diminution of regional effects when religious and secular civic engagement were added to regression models. In fact, the addition of these two civic-participation measures into the models reduced regional effects by about 30%.

When viewed through the lens of the Southern subculture of violence thesis, a finding of this sort presents researchers with a paradox. The Southern subculture of violence seems to be both fostered by religious values (the eye for an eye mentality detected by Ellison, 1991) and attenuated by religious factors (i.e., by faith-based civic engagement). To be sure, regional effects remain significant even when civic engagement was entered in our models. However, the significant drop in the magnitude of the regional coefficients, which was also observed by Rosenfeld et al. (2001), underscores the complex nature of adult homicide and the need for continued theoretical innovations.⁶ More work on this particular front needs to be undertaken to determine if other types of civic engagement (e.g., charitable giving) or other dimensions of religious participation beyond civic denominations (e.g., percentage conservative vs. mainline Protestant) might account for an even greater proportion of these regional effects in adult homicide.

Second, we were intrigued that the subculture of violence thesis simply does not hold for community-level juvenile homicide. There are no meaningful variations in juvenile homicide rates among communities located in the South, the West, and other parts of the country. This finding lends support to claims made by those who are now arguing that juvenile homicide has a distinctive character—one not readily comparable to adult homicide and one desperately in need of new theories targeted at explaining

ecological patterns manifested among nonadult populations. The seeming inapplicability of the subculture of violence thesis to juvenile homicide requires additional study. This line of work might be advanced by inquiries that are more focused in character because it is possible that a “sub-subculture” of violence exists in either rural or urban areas of the South that would go undetected in a study of this sort.

In the end, this study lends support to scholars who have claimed that extant macro-level theories of homicide are in need of considerable recasting. We have sought to push such theories forward by introducing a community resource perspective that is attuned to the crime-depressing effects that local civic participation can exert on violent crime. We have also added our voices to the chorus of scholars calling for a reexamination of criminological theories as they have traditionally been applied to macro-level violence. Given the fact that community-level homicide is an age-graded phenomenon that varies by region and is influenced by different forms of civic engagement, conventional explanations of violent crime in America may be in need of considerable revision. In this pursuit, researchers and theorists alike should take care to recognize both the community deficits that give rise to violent crime and the civic resources that many localities have at their disposal to reduce it.

NOTES

1. It is also notable that Ousey (1999) found that the effects of standard measures of socioeconomic disadvantage are typically stronger for Whites than for Blacks.

2. For example, it has become convention in much of the extant urban-based macro-criminological literature to utilize data for cities with a population base of at least 100,000 people, although there is little in the way of theoretical rationale for doing so.

3. The denominations identified as civically engaged by Tolbert, Lyson, and Irwin (1998) are African Methodist Episcopal Zion, American Baptist, Church of Christ, Congregational Christian, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Jewish, Latter-Day Saints, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian.

4. See Lee and Ousey (2001) for the method of interpreting coefficients.

5. Some of the variables presented in this table are collinear with some of the control variables presented in the baseline specifications in the prior models, although they are generally uncorrelated with the measures of religious and secular civic participation. We therefore relax our concerns about multicollinearity a bit in these models under the assumption that the possible benefits of diagnosing a problem with omitted variable bias outweigh the costs associated with some multicollinearity among the control variables.

6. Also like Rosenfeld, Messner, and Baumer (2001), our data indicate that our measures of secular and religious civic participation are lower in the South than in other regions of the country.

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