The correlation between community contextual characteristics and levels of criminal offending has long been documented in criminological research. However, the causal mechanisms that link contextual features of communities to acts of offending are poorly understood. To improve our understanding of the influence of community characteristics on crime we need to (1) better theorize the mechanisms that link community contextual characteristics to acts of crime and individual pathways in criminality, (2) advance methods and improve measurements of the community context and its characteristics (ecometrics), and (3) focus our efforts on exploring cross-level interactions—that is, the interactions between individuals and contexts in producing acts of crime and shaping individual pathways in criminality. This chapter aims to contribute to theories of crime causation by advancing criminological approaches to these three realms.
causes of crime we particularly need to better address questions about the
potential interaction between individual and community characteristics in
producing acts of crime and pathways in criminality (e.g., Wikström, 1998;
Wikström & Loeber, 2000). A special problem in advancing knowledge
about community contextual influences is that, in comparison with
psychometrics, what has been called “ecometrics,” that is, the measure-
ment of ecological settings, is highly underdeveloped (see Raudenbush &
Sampson, 1999). Overall, we believe that the field of criminology is charac-
terized by the following major limitations to knowledge on the community-
level causes of crime.

1. Studies of developmental pathways have neglected the influence
of the wider social context. Research on criminal careers and individual
development documents some distinctive developmental patterns in onset,
duration, variation, escalation, and termination of offending (e.g., Blum-
stein, Cohen, Roth, & Visher, 1986; Farrington & Wikström, 1993;
LeBlanc & Fréchette, 1989). The likelihood of offending is significantly
correlated to individual dispositions, for example, impulsiveness, and im-
mediate social situations, for example, family conditions (e.g., Loeber &
Farrington 1999; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). However, this research
largely neglects the importance of the wider contexts in which criminal
pathways are embedded. This includes meso- (e.g., communities) and
macroenvironments (e.g., systems of welfare and public health provision,
patterns of inequality, and residential segregation). The same holds for de-
velopmental research more generally, as pointed out by Brooks-Gunn,
Duncan, Klebanov, and Sealand (1993): “The bulk of developmental re-
search has focused on the most proximal environments, specifically the
family and the peer group . . . and has largely ignored neighborhood con-
texts” (p. 354).

2. Research on individual risk factors has largely failed to specify
in any detail the causal mechanisms that link the risk factors to acts of
crime and pathways in criminality. Most research on individual develop-
ment of offending uses the risk-and-protective-factors paradigm. Many in-
dividual and microenvironmental factors correlate with involvement in
crime. These include, for example, impulsiveness, lack of guilt, broken fam-
ily, poor parenting, parental criminality, child abuse, delinquent peers, and
poor academic performance. However, “a major problem of the risk factor
paradigm is to determine which risk factors are causes and which are
merely markers or correlated with causes” (Farrington, 2000, p. 7).

3. Research on environmental influences has largely failed to specify
in any detail the causal mechanisms that link social context with crime
and pathways in crime. Offending rates vary by neighborhood context
(e.g., Baldwin & Bottoms, 1976; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw &
have been developed to account for this relationship, most notably in the social disorganization/collective efficacy tradition, focusing on the effects of structural characteristics of neighborhoods (e.g., concentrated poverty, residential mobility, and population heterogeneity) on community social organization (e.g., levels of social capital, social integration/cohesion, and informal social control) and its association with offending and victimization (e.g., Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). There seems to be a general agreement among researchers in this tradition that influences on offending behavior by community structural characteristics are largely mediated by dimensions of community social organization.

Research has also shown links between routine activities (e.g., the everyday organization of family life, work, and leisure) and crime (Cohen & Felson, 1979) and between lifestyles/individual routines and offending risks (Osgood, Wilson, O’Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996; West & Farrington, 1977; Wikström, 2002). The community dimensions of routine activities and lifestyles research, however, have been seriously neglected (e.g., Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). The social disorganization/collective efficacy tradition implies the importance of routine activities and lifestyles (e.g., through the centrality of the concept of informal social control), but neither it nor routine activities/lifestyles research specify in any detail how social mechanisms link community organization and routines to criminal acts and pathways in crime (Wikström, 1998). Elliott et al. (1996) rightly observe that “the theoretical and empirical discussion of neighborhood effects is still at a rudimentary level” (pp. 389–390).

4. Interactions between individual characteristics and community contexts in producing criminal acts and shaping pathways in crime are poorly understood. Few studies have sought to disentangle the simultaneous effects of contextual and individual factors (e.g., Gottfredson, McNeill, & Gottfredson, 1991; Kupersmidt et al., 1995; Reiss & Rhodes, 1961). Wider contextual influences on pathways in crime, and interactions between contextual and individual influences, have scarcely been studied (cf. Loeber & Wikström, 1993; Wikström & Loeber, 2000). Much more is to be gained from integrating individual and environmental approaches than from their continued separate development (e.g., Farrington, Sampson, & Wikström, 1993; LeBlanc, 1997; Tonry, Ohlin, & Farrington, 1991). Sampson has noted that, “few studies have successfully demonstrated a unified approach to the individual and community level dimensions of crime” (Sampson, 1997, p. 32). Farrington observed that “researchers interested in neighbourhood influences have generally not adequately measured individual and family influences, just as researchers interested in individual and family influences have generally not adequately measured neighbourhood influences” (Farrington, 1993, p. 30).

5. Existing approaches to crime prevention and policy are poorly integrated. Existing community, developmental, situational, and criminal
justice approaches to crime control and prevention are poorly integrated, and based on an inadequate understanding of the interactions between individual and contextual factors. Crime prevention initiatives tend to target individuals, their development, or criminogenic situations (Wikström, Clarke, & McCord, 1995). Few integrated strategies have been formulated (cf. Wikström & Torstensson, 1999), and fewer have been implemented. And yet, “preventive strategies that are based on knowledge of ‘kinds of individuals’ in ‘kinds of contexts’ may have higher potential to be effective than strategies that pinpoint either the individual or the context” (Wikström & Loeber, 2000, p. 1203).

It can be argued that the key objective of social science is to discover patterns in social life and offer explanations for them. To do so, we need to map out the correlates of social action and try to understand the underlying causal mechanisms at work. A causal mechanism may be viewed as a plausible (unobservable) process that links the cause and the effect (for discussions of social mechanisms, see Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Some correlates of crime may be spurious associations, whereas others may help to identify what social mechanisms cause a particular social action. An important task is therefore to evaluate the correlates for their potential as representing causal mechanisms in relation to what constitutes social action.

The basic position taken here is that social actions, including criminal offending, ultimately are a result of individual choice and perception of alternatives, and that the key challenge for social science research is to understand the mechanisms by which individual characteristics and contextual factors, independently or in interaction, influence individual perceptions of alternatives and processes of choice. A key question for criminology then becomes, What causal mechanisms make people consider and choose to act upon options that constitute acts of crime? In this section we first briefly outline the causal mechanisms linking proximate factors and offending behavior. On this basis, we then go on to discuss the causal mechanisms linking the more distant (indirect) influence by the wider community context (structural and organizational characteristics) on offending behavior and pathways in crime.

An act of crime may be seen as primarily caused by the individual’s reason (motivation) to commit the particular act of crime, emerging from the interaction between the individual’s propensity to engage in criminality and the criminogenic features of the behavior setting in which the individual
finds him- or herself (Figure 5.1). The motivational argument is basically that some types of behavior settings are more likely than other settings to make the individual see crime as an option and then to act upon such an option. The propensity argument is basically that different individuals in the same behavior setting will vary as regards their likelihood to see crime as an option and to act upon such an option.

The potential role in this of the community context is, at least, two-fold. First, it may influence (in the longer term) an individual’s development of characteristics relevant to the (future) propensity to breach the rules of law and lifestyles that contribute to the shaping of pathways in criminality (e.g., by influencing processes of onset, duration, desistance, and escalation). Second, it may influence (in the short term) the prevalence of criminogenic behavior settings that confront individuals in their day-to-day living and therefore impact upon their motivation to offend.

Acts of Crime

Acts of crime include a wide range of different types of behaviors (e.g., shoplifting, rape, tax evasion, assassinations). The only thing they have in common is that they are the breaking of rules sanctioned by the state. Explaining acts of crime is therefore ultimately about explaining why people choose to break a rule of law, not about why they chose to commit a specific act. To explain acts of crime we do not necessarily need to be concerned with questions about why an act is considered a crime, and whether

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(morally) it is right or wrong that the particular act is criminalized. This argument is easily extended to also include the explanation of violations of other socially defined rules and conventions.

**Reasons (Motivations)**

The body and its biological makeup defines the individual. A human being has agency (powers to make things happen intentionally), which include committing acts of crime. Understanding actions (behavior under the person's guidance) is fundamentally about understanding individual perception of options and their choices (including the option to do nothing or just seeing one option).

It can be argued that the direct cause of social acts like crime is the reason (or motivation) a person has for committing the act (Davidson, 1980). An individual's reason for a particular act is traditionally viewed as made up of his or her desires (e.g., for gain, security, or respect) and beliefs (e.g., about what actions would result in achieving gain, security, or respect), but should also, according to Schick (1991), include an understanding of the act and the situation (e.g., a person wants a CD player, he believes that he could obtain a CD player through shoplifting, but he doesn’t see an act of theft as a way in which he would like to get a CD player). Schick (1997) refers to desires and beliefs as grounds for action and understandings as “the psychological context” (Schick, 1991, p. 84) or “our conceivings and labellings of the facts understood” (Schick, 1997, p. 23).

Reasons for actions do not need to be wholly rational in the sense that they only result from evaluations of cost and benefits in relation to best possible future outcomes. They can (simultaneously) be more or less oriented toward the past (norms and habits), the present (judgments, problem solving), and the future (outcomes and consequences). This is an important point since, although all actions involve some kind of choice, the choice may sometimes be more or less an expression of an individual norm or habit. For example, for many people the reason why they never or rarely see crime as an option may be that committing a crime is “something they just do not do,” making fear of possible future negative consequences irrelevant to their choice whether or not to commit a crime.

It seems plausible to argue that reasons for action and their associated emotions (be they predominantly oriented toward the past, the present, or the future) emerge in situations and that they therefore primarily have to do with within-individual variation in motivation (although this is not the same as saying that different individuals are likely to react identically in the same setting). Philosophically oriented discussions of people's reasons for action do not pay much attention to the role of individual differences. However, it is conceivable that what reasons people have for their actions is largely a reflection of their set of individual characteristics (their disposi-
tions [e.g., skills, temperament, conscience], and their immediate social situation [e.g., financial and social resources, social bonds/attachments] and the context in which they operate (the characteristics of the behavior settings they are confronted with). Individual characteristics and behavioral contexts may therefore be viewed as potential causes of the motivation for engaging in crime, that is, indirectly causing offending behavior through their impact on peoples desires, beliefs, and understandings.

Propensity

Although all individuals have the capability to commit acts of crime, there is a significant variation in individual involvement in criminality (e.g., Farrington, 2002; Moffitt, 1993; Wikström, 1987; Wolfgang & Figlio, 1972). It is plausible that part of this difference is due to more stable between-individual variations in the propensity to engage in acts of crime, that is, the readiness to react aggressively and to act upon desires in an unlawful way. From a holistic point of view, the individual propensity to act unlawfully may be thought of as primarily made up of specific cognitive and emotional characteristics that jointly determine morality and self-control. Individual morality may be defined in terms of an evaluative function of events in the world. It includes what the individual cares about, how strongly he or she cares about different things, how he or she thinks he or she should relate to other people, and what he or she considers as right and wrong (and associated feelings such as guilt and empathy). For example, how important is it for him or her to follow the rules of the law regulating his or her relationship to others and their property? This is primarily a result of his or her internalized norms and social bonds. Individuals’ self-control may be defined as their capability to inhibit or interrupt a response as an effect of the executive functions of their brain (e.g., Barkley, 1997, pp. 51–58; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, pp. 93–123)—for example, their capability to resist acting upon a temptation or provocation that if carried through would constitute a breach of the law.

An individual’s morality has obvious implications for how he or she would see different options and what kind of options he or she might consider (his or her understandings of specific acts and situations), while the level of self-control has obvious implications for the individual’s process of choice, that is, his or her degree of reflection and deliberation before making up his or her mind. Some individuals may never or only rarely consider breaking the law; others may have no or few problems with the thought of carrying out acts of crime. Some individuals may tend to act more on the spur of the moment; others may tend to more carefully consider the consequences of their actions. For example, it seems reasonable to assume that individuals who care strongly about following the law (and more broadly social conventions and rules) and who have high levels of self-control will
less often feel motivated to act unlawfully than those for whom the reverse applies.\textsuperscript{11}

If one accepts, at any given moment, that people vary in their propensity to engage in criminal activities, the key question then becomes \textit{why} people vary in their morality and self-control (i.e., in their propensity to engage in crime) and what role, if any, community contexts play in generating individual differences in morality and self-control.

\textit{Behavior Settings}

The environment is all that is external to the person and that may influence (enable or constrain and guide) his or her actions, including offending behavior. Individuals’ environments may be thought of as the configuration of \textit{behavior settings}\textsuperscript{12} (embedded in the wider cultural and structural behavioral context) that they are exposed to in the course of their day-to-day living. Individuals’ encounters with behavior settings create \textit{situations} (perception of options and prospects) in which the individuals may express their propensities by making judgments and choices resulting in actions.

It is plausible that some types of behavior settings are more likely than others to create situations in which individuals may act unlawfully. This assumption is consistent with the fact that crimes are far from randomly distributed in time and space, and that the occurrence of specific types of crimes tends to be linked to specific types of legal activities—for example, violence between strangers mostly occurs in the course of public entertainment activities (e.g., Block & Block, 1995; Wikström, 1991, pp. 229–231). The fact that even the most prolific offenders only spend a marginal proportion of their waking time offending underscores that behavior settings may play an important role in triggering unlawful actions (Wikström, 2002, p. 202). However, as pointed out by Farrington (2002, p. 690), “Existing research tells us more about criminal potential than about how that potential becomes the actuality of offending in any given situation.”

What makes one behavior setting more \textit{criminogenic} than another may largely be viewed as the extent to which it tends to produce \textit{temptations} (perceived options to realize particular desires in an unlawful way), \textit{provocations} (perceived attacks on the person’s property, security, or respect that generates anger or similar emotional states that may promote unlawful aggressive responses), and \textit{weak deterrence} (perceived low risks of detection, sanctions, etc., associated with acting unlawfully upon particular temptations or provocations present in the setting) (Wikström, 1998).

It is likely, in a given cultural and structural behavioral context (macroenvironment), that some types of behavior settings inherently produce higher levels than others of temptation, provocation, and deterrence.\textsuperscript{13} However, it is as well plausible to assume that the extent to which
individuals get tempted and provoked by a situation and the likelihood that they will act unlawfully upon such a temptation or provocation is dependent on their morality and self-control. It is further likely that the deterrent effect of a specific behavior setting is also dependent on the individual propensity to engage in crime. For example, for those with weak self-control the deterrent features of a behavior setting may not play such a great role for their choice of action since they may act more instantly with less concern for the future negative consequences of their current behavior (Wikström, 1995, 1996).

If one accepts the idea that behavior settings vary in their potential criminogenic characteristics, then the key question becomes why some behavior settings tend to be potentially more criminogenic than others (i.e., more often tend to create strong temptation or provocation and weak deterrence) and what role, if any, the wider community context has in producing behavior settings with more criminogenic characteristics (i.e., which tend to generate temptations or provocations and weak deterrence).

A community may be defined as the social and built environment of a common locality. There are no definite criteria for the geographical demarcation of a community. The community social environment consists of the patterns of social activities and social relationships in a locality. The community-built environment is the arrangement of buildings and spaces in a locality. The basic idea of most ecologically oriented approaches to the study of crime and pathways in criminality is that the community’s structural characteristics affect the conditions for social life and control in the community and that this, in turn, has some bearing on (1) how people who grow up in the community will develop their individual characteristics relevant to their future propensity to offend and their lifestyles that shape pathways in criminality (ecological context of development), and (2) how people who live in the community will behave in daily life, including involvement in acts of crime (ecological context of action).

Structural Characteristics

Communities vary widely in their structural characteristics. This includes variations in residential population characteristics and composition—for example, poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, family disruption, and residential stability. It also includes variation in the characteristics and layout of buildings and spaces and their related activities—for example, density and arrangement of space and presence of buildings and space for non-residential use (Michelson, 1976). One might also add variations in the characteristics and composition of the nonresidential population of the
area (e.g., those who work but do not live in the area, those who visit people who live in the area, or those who participate in activities taking place in the area). Variations in community structural characteristics are fundamentally a result of processes of residential segregation and differential land use which, in turn, are related to aspects of the wider political economy, such as means of production (technology), division of labor, and distribution of wealth (inequality) (e.g. Sampson, 1999, pp. 261–263; Wikström, 1998, p. 289).

We suggest here that the social mechanisms by which community structural characteristics, through their impact on the formation of the community social environment, influence individual development and actions may be summarized as the three Rs; resources, rules, and routines (Wikström, 1998, p. 284). The basic argument is that the community structure provides resources and rules that the residents can draw upon in their daily life, which in turn influence the patterning and content of their daily routines and the specific resources and rules associated with specific types of behavior settings generated by the community routines (see Figure 5.2). The role of the community context for human action is thus that it constrains or facilitates and guides human action through the behavior settings created by the community routines and the specific resources and rules attached to particular behavior settings.

Although the importance of community resources and rules (and to a much lesser degree community routines) for the explanation of individual involvement in crime has long been recognized in community-oriented criminological research, what has been missing is a concept that directly links the community context to individual development and actions (Wikström, 1998). Behavior setting is a concept that may provide such a linkage. As previously argued, it is in individuals’ encounters with behavior settings that situations are created in which the individuals, depending on

FIGURE 5.2. Behavior settings. Key social mechanisms of community structural-characteristic influences.
their characteristics, and the characteristics of the behavior setting, will perceive options, make choices, and take action.

Resources

Community resources may be viewed as all the external social and economic support (by individuals and institutions) the residents in a community can draw upon in their day-to-day lives. They facilitate or constrain human development and action. The aggregate of individual and institutional resources in a community may be thought of as the community capital (Wikström, 1998). Communities vary in their level of resources (e.g., residents’ social capital [i.e., their access to resourceful relationships they can draw upon] and their access to and quality of childcare, schools, and medical facilities). The concept of disadvantage is commonly used to describe communities with weak social and economic resources (e.g., Wilson, 1987). Community resources will have a general influence on the routine behavior of the residents of the community (e.g., their lifestyles).

Community resources are experienced and utilized by community residents in the behavior settings created by the community routines. It is plausible that the level of community resources (community capital) will have an impact on the residents’ potential to develop their personal resources (human, financial, and social capital) and to realize their desires. This, in turn, will have some influence on how individuals are likely to see their options and prospects in their day-to-day living, and therefore impact on the choices they make and their course of action.

Rules

Community rules are all those norms and conventions (formal and informal) that the residents may be confronted with in their day-to-day life. They guide human development and action. Communities may vary in their norms and conventions, their cohesiveness in values and expectations, and the degree to which norms and conventions are upheld by interventions and sanctions. The concept of collective efficacy has been suggested to describe the residents’ willingness to intervene for the common good (i.e., their potential to exercise informal social control if needed) as the result of shared expectations and mutual trust in the community (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999; Sampson et al., 1997).

Community rules will have a general influence on the routine behavior of the residents of the community (e.g., their socialization practices). Community rules are communicated and upheld in behavior settings. It is plausible that community rules have an impact on the content and strength of the norms that are internalized and the social bonds that the residents in the community develop, and, in turn, what kind of desires and interests
they have. This, in turn, will have some influence on how the individuals are likely to evaluate different options they perceive in their day-to-day living and the resulting course of action they may take.

It is generally assumed in the ecological literature that weak community resources (disadvantages) make it more difficult for residents to collectively create and uphold effective rules for behavior (collective efficacy). However, it may also be argued that community rules (weak collective efficacy), in the longer run, may impact upon community resources (increased disadvantage), through the influence of high levels of disorder and crime on selective out-migration by more socially and economically resourceful residents and institutions (e.g., Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Skogan, 1990; Taub, Taylor, & Dunham, 1984).

**Routines**

Community routines are the pattern of activities by time and place that occur in the community. Routine activities have been defined as “any recurrent and prevalent activities, which provide for basic population and individual needs” (Cohen & Felson, 1979, p. 593). They include activities related to family life, education, work, leisure, and transportation and are manifested in the behavior settings they create (e.g., family dinners, lectures, car manufacturing, tennis matches, and bus journeys). Routine activities are fundamentally generated by the necessity for individuals to cooperate to provide for their biological needs and social desires. They are broadly shaped by the community social environment through its provision of resources and rules. For example, one would expect some general differences between communities in socialization practices (routines) by their levels of disadvantage (resources) and their levels of collective efficacy (rules). The actual resources available to, and the rules guiding, activities in a particular behavior setting are also likely to vary between communities depending on their level of disadvantage and collective efficacy. For example, communities may vary by their level of disadvantage in the extent to which playgrounds are well equipped and kept up, and by their level of collective efficacy, to what extent playgrounds are well supervised.

It is plausible that the range and characteristics of behavior settings that individuals encounter in their day-to-day living as a result of the community routines will influence their development and actions because, as mentioned earlier, community rules are communicated and upheld, and community resources are experienced and utilized in the behavior settings.

Individual development occurs in an ecological context (a set of nested structures), and this context will impact on the course of development.
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Moen, Elder, & Lücher, 1995). In Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecology of human development, it is the individual’s day-to-day routines and activities, “the objects to which he responds and the people with whom he interacts on a face-to-face basis” (p. 7), that have a direct influence on his development. The community context has therefore only an indirect influence on individual development through its impact on shaping the form and content of the individual’s day-to-day routines and activities.

Place of residence is an important determinant of ecological context. Modern societies, especially large urban areas, are highly segregated (e.g., Janson, 1980; Schwirian, 1974). Segregation means that the community structural characteristics, and thereby the community resources, rules, and routines, vary by areas of residence. This, in turn, means that the behavioral context (the configuration of behavior settings and their characteristics) that confronts the residents will vary by area of residence. Consider, for example, the difference in behavioral contexts between a homogeneous, residentially stable, and wealthy rural town and a heterogeneous, residentially unstable, and poor inner-city area.

The neighborhood, defined as the social and built environment surrounding the place of residence, is likely to have the greatest importance for the type and characteristics of the behavior settings the developing toddler and child is confronted with (e.g., Timms, 1971, pp. 31–32). Still, in adolescence, neighborhood-based behavior settings may for many youths be a significant part of their behavioral context, while, for most people, it is less likely that the neighborhood will play an equally important role for their behavioral context in adulthood. In the widening world of the developing child and adolescent, their behavioral context will, as mentioned, generally expand outside their neighborhood, and therefore the need to take this fact into account when assessing community influences on development of individual characteristics and lifestyles increases with age. This is something that has rarely been attempted in studies of neighborhood effects.

As previously argued, individuals vary in their propensity to break the rules of the law and the key elements of this may be summarized as their morality and self-control. Development in the propensity to act unlawfully might therefore be defined as a lasting change in an individual’s morality and self-control, making them more likely (in the future) to see acts of crime as an option and to act upon such options. Individuals’ variation in the propensity to engage in crime is likely to be a result of their developmental history, particularly their childhood and early adolescent development. The individual is not a passive recipient of environmental influences. Developmental outcomes will be a result of the interaction between the individuals
and their environment (Magnusson, 1988, pp. 46–47). It is likely that the impact of the environment is strongest at the points in time when a particular developing characteristic has *its most rapid development* (e.g., Bloom, 1964; Earls & Carlson, 1995). It is further likely, as a result of an *increasing agency* through childhood (i.e., increasing physical and mental powers to intentionally make things happen), that individuals become generally more active and selective in relation to their environment, and therefore gradually enhance their potential to influence their own course of development.

Socialization has a key role when it comes to understanding individual development of morality and self-control (e.g., Aronfreed, 1968; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Kohlberg, 1984; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Martens, 1993). The role of the community context for community variation in socialization practices is a highly underresearched area. However, existing research suggests that it is likely that there is relevant variation in socialization practices by community context (e.g., Earls & Carlson, 1995; Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999; Sampson, 1993, p. 165; Steinberg, Darling, Fletcher, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1993; Wikström & Loeber, 2000, p. 1130). In this section we discuss the potential role of the community context for community variation in socialization practices, and the resulting community variation in behavior settings that may promote the development of self-control and morality.

The main hypothesis here is that community capital and community collective efficacy influences (1) community socialization practices and (2) the specific resources available and rules guiding the particular types of behavior settings making up the socialization practice. This, in turn, determines the frequency with which children and adolescents in the community will encounter behavior settings having characteristics that may promote individual development of self-control and morality (Figure 5.3).

Community variation in *community capital* means that communities vary in the degree to which they can provide resources and services (e.g., time, money, and knowledge) to support families in their parenting role, over and above the resources of the individual family. Community variation in *collective efficacy* means that communities vary in the degree to which they can provide parental support by the monitoring and upholding of common rules in public and semipublic places, over and above the families’ own capabilities to effectively monitor and react to rule violations outside the home.

*Socialization practices* include *family nurturing strategies* (e.g., the extent to which parents tend to prioritize activities that promote their children’s health and their development of cognitive and emotional skills).
They also include *family management techniques* (e.g., methods of discipline and extent of monitoring of children’s activities) and *collective supervision* of children’s behavior outside the home (e.g., neighbors’ interventions and reactions to rule-breaking behavior). While collective supervision clearly is a community factor, families nurturing their children, and particularly their management strategies, are also likely to be influenced by the community context in which families operate (e.g., Furstenberg, 1999, pp. 155–156; Sampson, 1997; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, pp. 225–296).

Strategies of family nurturing are likely to be most important for development outcomes in childhood (particularly for self-control), while family management techniques, and particularly the level of collective supervision, are likely to increase in their importance for development outcomes over late childhood and into adolescence. *Effective socialization practices* may be defined as those that create a high frequency of behavior settings that promote the development of self-control and morality. In communities where the socialization practices are effective, one would expect fewer children and adolescents to develop a strong propensity to act unlawfully.

Characteristics of behavior settings that may promote the development of *self-control* include settings with good nurturing, which, for example, may effect the child’s development of executive functions; settings where rules for behavior and reactions to rule violations are consistent and foreseeable; and settings where long-term goals are encouraged over immediate gratification. Features of behavior settings that may promote the development of *morality* include those in which the developing child experiences that significant others show respect for him or her and for others and their property. It also includes behavior settings where the developing child or
adolescent faces interventions and reactions when he or she shows no respect for others or their property.

The nature and strength of the impact of community socialization practices on individual development may be dependent on the developmental phase (since some characteristics tend to develop most strongly in certain, often early, phases, and the individual’s agency increases by age), and the individual’s previous developmental history (since development outcome is a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment, and therefore, at any given time, is dependent on the characteristics the individual has already developed). In general, this would suggest that the impact of community context on individual development of self-control and morality (propensity) is likely to fade with age.

A lifestyle may be defined as the individual’s preference for and active seeking out of particular sets of activities and related attributes. Not very much is known about the relationship between the community context and the development of particular lifestyles, although it is clear that lifestyles do tend to vary between communities (e.g., Michelson, 1976, pp. 61–94). Lifestyles are important because they represent individuals’ activity field, thereby influencing exposure to different types of behavior settings. The link between community context and development of lifestyles is particularly interesting since persistent and serious offending may be strongly linked to particular types of lifestyles. In this section we discuss some tentative ideas about how the development of lifestyles may be influenced by the community context.

The main hypothesis here is that community capital and collective efficacy influence (1) the lifestyles of children and adolescents and (2) the specific resources available and rules guiding the particular types of behavior settings that make up their lifestyles. This will influence the frequency with which they are exposed to criminogenic behavior settings (i.e., settings entailing temptation or provocation and having weak deterrent qualities), and in turn, their involvement in crime and the shaping of pathways in criminality—for example, age of onset and escalation of seriousness of offending (Figure 5.4).

The types of lifestyles that appear to generate the most risk for involvement in offending are those in which children frequently socialize informally outside the home (Osgood et al., 1996; Sampson & Groves, 1989; West & Farrington, 1977, pp. 68–70; Wikström, 2002). It is plausible that children and adolescents living in more disadvantaged communities generally tend to socialize informally in semipublic and public settings more frequently than those living in more advantaged communities. This may depend on family and institutional resources and facilities in the community.
to provide structured leisure time activities, but also the degree to which parents and others in the community generally tend to encourage children’s and adolescent’s involvement in structured leisure time activities (e.g., violin lessons, basketball practice, and theater visits). The latter may be seen partly as a function of the human and social capital among parents and other relevant actors (residents and functionaries) in the community.

However, there may also be reasons to believe that the risk generated by children’s and youths’ informal socialization outside the home may be dependent on other qualities of the community context. The community context may not only influence the degree to which children and adolescents socialize informally, but also the characteristics of the settings in which this happens. It seems reasonable to assume that informal socializing in communities with high levels of collective efficacy will generate less criminogenic behavior settings than in those communities with weak collective efficacy. For example, community levels of parental and collective monitoring of children’s behavior in semipublic and public settings, and the likelihood that anyone will interfere against violations of norms and conventions in such settings, is likely to vary by community context.

Lifestyles in which children and youths spend significant time in public and semipublic behavior settings in which they informally socialize and are unsupervised by adults, in a behavioral context in which they may express violations of norms and conventions without much risk of interference from others (e.g., they can freely experiment with alcohol and drug use), may be considered high-risk lifestyles. Settings in which children and youths (at times) may socialize unsupervised are typically “street corners,” “playgrounds,” “parks,” “fair grounds,” and “shopping malls.” For adolescents it may also include entertainment settings like “pubs and bars” and “discos.” Behavior settings that are unsupervised by significant others and in which rule violations can take place without much risk of intervention
and reaction from others may be particularly criminogenic (i.e., likely to create temptations and provocations and to have weak deterrent qualities). In communities where risky lifestyles are less prevalent, one would expect fewer children and adolescents to get involved in crime, particularly in frequent and serious criminality.

Lifestyle formation and development is of particular interest in relation to pathways in criminality. A pathway may be defined as “a common pattern of development shared by a group of individuals, which is distinct from the behavioral development experienced by other groups of individuals” (Loeber, 1991, p. 98). A pathway in criminality may be seen as a stepping-stone process where the outcome of previous development influences the outcome of later development (Farrington, 1986). For example, initial criminality may influence the likelihood of later criminality, and the factors that influenced initial involvement in crime may be partly others than those influencing continuation in offending (Loeber & LeBlanc, 1990).

Individuals differ in the degree to which they penetrate pathways in crime, from those committing no crime to those who advance to the most serious forms of crime (Loeber & Farrington, 2001, pp. 7–8). Although there is not much research on community contextual influences on pathways in criminality, one study has shown that the degree of penetration varies by community context (with more penetration in disadvantaged communities), and therefore that it is possible that community contexts influence the level of penetration of a given pathway (Loeber & Wikström, 1993). One conceivable reason for this is that the type and characteristics of the behavior settings that children and adolescents encounter in areas that are disadvantaged and low in collective efficacy may more strongly facilitate and promote continued offending after the initial involvement. This may occur, for example, because of a higher exposure to settings of informal socialization unsupervised by adults and a behavioral context in which bystander intervention and reactions to offending may be less likely. It is also plausible that the more an individual penetrates a pathway in criminality, the more actively he or she will seek out behavior settings that will have criminogenic features. All in all, continuation and escalation in offending may be strongly influenced by lack of community capital and collective efficacy through its impact on lifestyles.

Typically, research into community influences on crime and offending behavior has used predefined administrative areas as units of analysis combined with official census data to measure community structural character-
istics (e.g., Baldwin & Bottoms, 1976; Shaw & McKay, 1969; Wikström, 1991). More recent developments in econometrics, the measurement and assessment of ecological settings, have included the use of contextual surveys (e.g., Sampson et al., 1997; Wikström & Dolmen, 2001) and systematic social observation, along with multilevel statistical methods evaluating and accounting for measurement error (Raudenbush & Sampson, 1999; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). In this section we discuss the analytical and methodological implications of this perspective for research designs in the study of community context influences on offending behavior.

It is commonly believed that the effects of community contexts on individual development and actions are weak in terms of proportion-explained variance. For example, Shonkoff and Phillips (2000, p. 332) report that “one striking result in broad-based studies of neighborhood effects on young children is that there are more differences in families and children within neighborhoods than between them” (italics in original). The findings are largely the same in studies specifically focusing on offending behavior (e.g., Gottfredson et al., 1991; Lizotte, Thornberry, Krohn, Chard-Wierschem, & McDowan, 1994; Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986). Against this background, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that the community context does not contribute much to individual variation in offending. However, there are several reasons why this reasoning is incorrect.

For one thing, variance components are descriptive statistics that reflect observed distributions rather than causal effects. For example, because of economic segregation, very few poor people, especially minorities, live in high-income areas. But experimental conditions that induce exogenous change such that poor people are assigned to better neighborhoods can still produce large causal effects even in the face of previously observed variance components that show little variation across contexts. Put simply, substantial causal effects of context are not incompatible with small intraclass neighborhood correlations (Duncan & Raudenbush, 2001; Sampson et al., 2002).

Second, what appear as individual characteristics at one point in time may, at least partly, have been a result of earlier community-context influences on the development of the particular characteristic. In fact, one can argue that the environment in which the individual grows up is more or less likely to have influenced the development of all individual characteristics relevant to offending behavior (e.g., Dishion, French, & Patterson, 1995, pp. 437–438; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, pp. 6–7). It follows that controlling for nonexogenous individual characteristics as a general strategy to determine community-context influences on individual criminality is a fundamentally flawed strategy. It is only when studying the role of the context of action that such an approach is warranted.24

Third, and relatedly, it may be argued that there is a need for a clearer analytical separation of the study of the role of the community context for
development of propensity and its role in motivation for offending (i.e., context of action). In the former case (i.e., developmental context), it is predominantly the early development of individual characteristics relevant to future offending risks that is in focus. In the latter case (i.e., the action context), the focus is on how types of behavior settings, predominantly in late childhood and adolescence, influence the degree and nature of involvement in crime by individuals with different characteristics. From a developmental perspective, the two are obviously linked.

Fourth, in comparison with measures of individual characteristics, community-context measures are generally crude and less well developed. Raudenbush and Sampson (1999) argue that "without comparable standards to evaluate ecological assessments, the search for individual and ecological effects may overemphasize the individual component simply because the well-studied psychometric properties are likely to be superior to the unstudied ecometric ones" (p. 3). New standards are thus needed to bring community contextual measures up to the level that psychometric research has long operated under.25

Fifth, the use of predefined areas as a measure of residential community context does not take into account the fact that individuals living in a given community may vary in the exposure to their community characteristics and in their exposure to environments outside their residential community. For example, many behaviors of interest in criminology (e.g., stealing, smoking, taking drugs) unfold in places (e.g., schools, parks, center-city areas) outside of the residential neighborhoods in which the individuals involved in these behaviors live. This is a problematic scenario for neighborhood research seeking to explain contextual effects on individual differences in behavior since it excludes variations in the individuals' activity fields within their neighborhoods, but also the environmental effect by the individuals' activity field outside their neighborhoods, which, as previously argued, expand by age and may be particularly important in adolescence. A technique that may be useful to help overcome this problem is what has been called space–time budgets.

A technique to study the individuals' participation in behavior settings is to use what is called time budgets or time diaries (see Pentland, Harvey, Lawton, & McColl, 1999 for an overview of time–budget studies). Typically, such studies involve interviewing the subjects about their activities over a time period (e.g., a day or a week) divided into time segments (e.g., by the hour). The subjects are basically questioned about what they were doing (e.g., eating), with whom (e.g., with parents), and at what place (e.g., at home). This information makes it possible to study the range and characteristics of behavior settings in which the individual participates. As
claimed by Robinson (1999, p. 48), time budgets “represent complete accounts of daily activity” and they “allow one to generate estimates of how much societal time is spent on the complete range of human behavior.”

As suggested by Wikström (2002), time budget techniques can be complemented by questions regarding the geographical location of subject’s activity (e.g., by predefined areas such as census tracts). This enables the researcher to directly link community context features to individual behavior settings. This may be useful in two ways. First, by taking random samples of the population in predefined areas, the data from a space–time budget study gives information on what kind of behavior settings a particular community context is likely to generate. Second, on the individual level, it tells us to what degree an individual is exposed to the various types of behavior settings generated by the community context, and also the individual exposure to behavior settings outside his or her residential community. The latter, for example, makes it possible to control for individual exposure to the neighborhood environment and environments outside the neighborhood when trying to assess contextual influences.26

We conclude this chapter by stressing the importance of studying cross-level interaction effects and offering a set of tentative hypotheses concerning the general nature and direction of community-context influences on individual development and action relevant to offending behavior. The relationship between individual characteristics and community-context characteristics in influencing offending behavior and its development is a highly neglected area of research. And yet, the community-level theory we have advanced here suggests that the study of cross-level interactions may be the most promising avenue advancing knowledge about the role of the community context in crime causation.

Our theory suggests that the nature and strength of community-context influences (levels of community capital and collective efficacy) on the individual development of propensity and motivation to offend varies by developmental phase. We hypothesize that the community influences on development of propensity decrease from infancy to adolescence, while its influence on motivation increases from infancy to adolescence.

The main suggested reason for the decrease by age in the influence of community socialization practices on the development of propensity to offend is that many cognitive and emotional characteristics that determine
morality, and particularly self-control, have their strongest development early in life and that they thereafter tend to stabilize (e.g., Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Tangey & Fischer, 1995). It seems reasonable, as we have previously argued, that the environmental impact on development of individual characteristics is at its strongest during the periods when the particular characteristics have their most rapid development.27 We would expect to find a community effect, particularly on the early development of self-control and morality; we specifically expect to find higher rates of children developing low self-control and weak morality among those living in areas with weak community capital and low collective efficacy.

The community-context influence on individual motivation to offend (through its supply of criminogenic behavior settings) is dependent on the extent to which the individual participates in settings with criminogenic features. As children grow older, their activity fields expand outside the home, and therefore their risk to be exposed to criminogenic behavior settings in their neighborhood and also in the wider community outside their neighborhood increase. It is against this background, we argue, that the role of the community context as an influence on individual’s motivation to offend increases, particularly over the childhood period. In this process the community-context influence on lifestyle formation is particularly relevant. It should be stressed that lifestyle formation is not independent of community socialization practices but is partly a consequence of them. We would expect to find a community effect on late childhood and adolescent lifestyle formation; we expect to find higher rates of adolescents developing risky lifestyles among those living in areas with weak community capital and low collective efficacy.

We argue that the nature and strength of community-context influences on motivation to offend is dependent on the individual’s previous developmental history (determining his or her current propensity). We specifically hypothesize that the community strength of impact on motivation to offend varies inversely by the individual propensity to offend. That is, the community context has the strongest influence on individual motivation to offend for those with the weakest propensity to offend. They will be the individuals for whom exposure to strong situational inducements occasionally may make them act unlawfully. On the other hand, individuals who have developed a strong propensity to offend will be less affected by the community-context supply of criminogenic behavior settings. That is so because they are more likely to be active in seeking out good opportunities to offend. In other words, their offending is more about high propensities than about strong situational inducement.
Although very little research exists on the interaction between individual characteristics and community context in determining offending, two recent studies lend some support to the assumption that the community context of action may have its strongest impact on individuals with weaker propensity to offend. In these two studies it was shown that community levels of disadvantage had the strongest effect, respectively, (1) on adolescent onset in serious offending (Wikström & Loeber, 2000) and (2) on prevalence of adolescent offending (Wikström, 2002) for the most well-adjusted youths, while there were no significant difference by community disadvantage for the most poorly adjusted youths.28

In this chapter we have argued that advancement in the understanding of the role of community context in crime causation requires better theorizing of social mechanisms that link community context to individual development and acts, improved “ecometrics,” and a focus of study on cross-level interactions. A key premise of our discussion has been that the types and characteristics of the behavior settings in which the individual actually participates influence individual action and development most directly. We have also argued that the supply of types and characteristics of behavior settings vary by community contextual features such as the level of community capital and collective efficacy (see Figure 5.2). We have particularly highlighted the importance of behavior settings relating to socialization practices and lifestyle formation (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4). We have stressed the importance of perceptions of alternatives and processes of choice for individual acts of crime (see Figure 5.1). Finally, we believe that advancing the study of community-level influences on individual development and social action requires the use of more adequate methods to study both individual routines (e.g., space–time budgets) and community-level mechanisms (ecometrics), coupled with a rigorous focus on the analyses of cross-level interactions.

Several implications for research design flow from the logic of our position. To test ecological or community effects on the development of propensity, multilevel longitudinal designs are obviously essential. Studying development in context is the operative strategy; much lip service is given to this as desirable in criminology, but very little empirical research actually exists that is at all relevant. To test hypotheses of the context of social action, both longitudinal and cross-sectional designs are appropriate, as long as the context is directly measured. Experiments where behavior settings and ecological contexts are randomly manipulated are especially intriguing as a way to test causal hypotheses of the sort proposed in this chapter.
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1. However, the reasons for committing a certain act may also be the reason, or a part thereof, for breaking a law.
2. But, of course, this is in its own right a very important topic. However, it is highly plausible that societies at a given state of development, by and large, will be similar in what core types of behavior they tend to criminalize (e.g., Newman, 1976).
4. Schick (1997) gives the following criminological-relevant example of what he means by understandings: “The man who rapes and the man who doesn’t are the same in their beliefs and desires. They both believe that a show of force might frighten some women into having sex with them, and they both want sex. They differ in their understandings. The rapist sees rape as raw, rough sex, as tough-guy sex, the way he likes it. The other sees rape as a violation. He wants sex, but not violation. and so the way he understands rape doesn’t connect with what he wants, which means that he isn’t moved to rape” (p. 19).
5. For an in-depth discussion of dimensions of human agency, see Emirbayer and Mische (1998).
6. For the importance of social bonds/attachments, see, for example, Durkheim (1961) and Hirschi (1969).
7. Individual and contextual characteristics, independently or interacting, may be viewed as causes of individuals’ reasons to engage in crime if, when manipulated, they through some plausible mechanism will produce some change in people (in the short or longer term) relevant to how they perceive options and make choices in particular settings regarding whether or not to breach a rule of law.
9. Morality covers many more actions than those that are considered unlawful. In this context, however, we are concerned with moral aspects of unlawful acts, that is, the extent to which the individual finds different regulations of the law as right or wrong (depending on internalized norms), and whether the individual cares about, and how strongly he or she cares about, following the rules of law (depending on social bonds). It should be stressed that morality is used here in a nonjudgmental sense, that is, it refers to the correspondence between individual and collective norms and conventions. For example, weak individual morality refers to a low correspondence to what people in general care about
and find to be right or wrong. Similarly, as regarding morality and the law, weak morality refers to a low correspondence between what is regulated in the law and what the individual cares about and finds to be right or wrong. The importance of taking morality seriously when trying to understand “compliance with legal rules” has recently been well argued by Bottoms (2002).

9. Shonkoff and Phillips (2000, p. 116) state that “there is a growing consensus among researchers as to what executive functions entail: self-regulation, sequencing of behavior, flexibility, response inhibition, planning, and organization of behaviour.” The roles of psychotic disorders like schizophrenia for offending may be highly relevant in this context but will not be specifically discussed in this chapter.

10. The idea that individuals’ involvement in crime is dependent on the extent to which they are “vulnerable to temptations of the moment” (i.e., vary in their degree of self-control) is prominent in contemporary criminology and has most strongly been advocated by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, p. 87). The use of the term self-control by Gottfredson and Hirschi has a wider connotation than the one applied here, and involves aspects of what here has been defined as belonging to morality.

11. Barker (1968) originally suggested the concept of behavior setting. Behavior settings have been defined as naturally occurring units with standing patterns of behavior and a physical milieu that surrounds or encloses the behavior (Moss, 1976, pp. 214–216). They are located in time and space. Examples may be pub drinking sessions, classes/lectures, youths socializing on street corners, and family dinners. It is important to stress, as Schoggen (1989, p. 31) does, that “a standing pattern of behavior is not a characteristic of the particular individuals involved; it is an extra-individual behavior phenomenon; it has unique and stable characteristics that persist even when current inhabitants of the setting are replaced with others.”

12. The degree to which given types of behavior settings create temptation, provocation, and weak deterrence may be related to the characteristics of the wider cultural and structural context in which it is embedded. This implies that this may vary between nations and in the same nation over time.

13. Giddens’s (1979, 1984) theory of structuration stresses the importance of rules, resources, and routines for understanding social life. However, his discussion of these concepts differs in many respects from ours.

14. Dishion, French, and Patterson (1995, pp. 428–429, 450–455) are among the few that have stressed the importance of behavior settings for antisocial behavior. However, in their discussion the use of the concept is very broad, including as behavior settings all from neighborhoods to classrooms.

15. Human capital (e.g., skills), financial capital (e.g., money), and social capital (e.g., resourceful relationships the actor can draw upon) all refer to resources, albeit of different character (see, e.g., Coleman, 1990).

16. It can be argued that rules may sometimes act as resources.

17. Kohlberg attaches a strong role to the environment in its influence on individual actions of a moral character. He talks about “sense of community, solidarity and cohesion attained in a group” (1984, p. 263) as the moral atmosphere, and argues that “moral action usually takes place in a social group context, and that context usually has a profound influence on the moral decision making of
individuals. Individual moral decision-makings in real life are almost always made in the context of group norms or group decision-making processes. Moreover, individual moral action is often a function of these norms and processes” (p. 263).

19. For example, Kornhauser (1978) argues that social disorganization, defined as lack of “a structure through which common values can be realized and common problems solved “ (p. 63), emerges in poor, residentially unstable, and heterogeneous communities because it is difficult to realize common values among the residents, due to such factors as poor communication resulting from residents’ diverse and changing cultural backgrounds and experiences, but also because the social institutions, due to factors such as lack of money, skills, and personal investments by residents, tend to be inadequate, isolated from each other, and unstable. Poorly functioning social institutions and a lack of common values among community residents result in poor informal social controls and defective socialization, which, in turn, causes high rates of offending by community residents. See also Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls (1999).

20. A recent time–budget study of 14- to 15-year-olds in the city of Peterborough, UK, showed that the youths, on average, spent 38% of their waking time in the home, 20% in other places in their neighborhood, 28% in their school and, not including time spent in their school, 14% outside their neighborhood (Wikström, 2002).

21. This also has some implications for what structures are relevant as indirectly influencing their day-to-day life. Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, and Connell (1995, p. 54) suggest “that in early childhood, the neighborhood influences children’s development primarily by its effects on parents. A secondary effect could be formed through the quality of care provided by other major caregivers (who are typically members of the community). In middle childhood and adolescence, the effects of neighborhoods on development may be mediated by a new set of factors, primarily school and peers. Finally, in early and late adolescence, still other factors are hypothesized to mediate neighborhoods’ effects on development. Possibilities include direct contact with certain ‘neighborhood processes’ like adult monitoring of youth, as well as broader institutional and cultural processes like the operation of the labor market, the justice system, and the beliefs and values that guide family formation.”

22. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 3) has in general terms defined development as “a lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment.”

23. Farrington (2002, p. 681) stresses that “the belief that offending is wrong, or a strong conscience, tends to be built up if parents are in favour of legal norms, if they exercise close supervision over their children, and if they punish socially disapproved behaviour using love-oriented discipline. Antisocial tendencies can also be inhibited by empathy, which may develop as a result of parental warmth and loving relationships. The belief that offending is legitimate, and anti-establishment attitudes generally, tend to be built up if children have been exposed to attitudes and behaviour favouring offending (e.g., in a modelling process), especially by members of their family, friends and in their communities.”

24. A common strategy in multilevel research is to estimate a model whereby a host
of individual, familial, peer, and school variables are entered as controls along-
side current neighborhood characteristics of residence. But this strategy con-
founds the potential importance of both long-term community influences and
mediating developmental pathways regarding children’s personal traits and dis-
positions, learning patterns from peers, family socialization, school climate,
and more. Put differently, static models that estimate the direct effect of current
neighborhood context on a particular outcome (e.g., delinquency, level of aca-
demic achievement) may be partitioning-out relevant variance in a host of me-
diating and developmental pathways of influence.

25. A full discussion of this methodological paradigm is found in Raudenbush and
Sampson (1999).

26. A related issue concerns approaches to assessing how individuals perceive alter-
natives and make choices in particular behavior settings. One way to tap this
may be the use of scenarios in which the subjects are asked to report the alter-
native they see and the choices they are likely to make in different kinds of hy-
pothetical behavior settings presented to them. This would, for example, enable
the researcher to study variation between communities in individual perception
of options and choices relating to acts of crime in similar types of behavior set-
ings. The aim of scenario-based research is to try and create as much as possi-
ble real-life situations. In criminological research, scenarios have predomi-
nantly been used in deterrence research (see, e.g., Nagin, 1998).

27. Although we do not claim that there are no further developments later in life of
individual characteristics relevant to individual propensity to offend. In partic-
ular, it is plausible that changes in the individual’s immediate social situation
(e.g., his or her attachments) may influence his or her morality (particularly
what he or she cares about).

28. In these studies propensity to offend was measured by a composite risk-protect-
tive construct including key individual disposition and immediate social situ-
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