

# Social Disorganization and Neighborhood Crime in Argentine Shantytowns

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the effects of conflictive social networks on a particular form of neighborhood crime called 'street harassment' in Argentine shantytowns. The data for the study is provided by a victimization survey applied in six Argentine cities, comparing the association between crime and neighborhood cohesion in different social strata. The study is based on social disorganization theory, but it adds two new insights to this perspective by exploring the role of political leadership and culture. Its main conclusion is that while conflictive social networks are strongly associated with neighborhood crime, these are concentrated in small numbers of shantytown dwellers. In addition, results also reveal that ambivalent attitudes towards conventional social principles and lack of trust in local political leadership are associated with neighborhood conflicts and crime.

**Keywords:** Culture, politics, crime, networks, poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to analyze the effects of conflictive social networks on a particular form of neighborhood crime called 'street harassment' in Argentine shantytowns. Street harassment consists in soliciting money in a threatening way to occasional passers-by. This form of crime relates strongly to the conditions of material deprivation found in shantytowns and to the interpersonal conflicts that take place in those contexts. Our main hypothesis is that street harassment has a higher incidence among shantytown dwellers, especially amidst those neighbors who participate in conflictive relationships with proximate residents. We framed this hypothesis in social disorganization theory.

Originally, social disorganization theory proposed that in areas with lower social economic status there would be weaker social ties among neighbors, less informal social control of public spaces and thus more neighborhood crime. In opposition, urban areas with stronger social networks had a more informal control of public spaces and experience less crime (Shaw *et al.* 1929; Shaw and MacKay 1942;1969). However, further developments in social disorganization theory showed that not all types of social network mobilize the kind of resources that may help to inhibit crime (Smicha-Fagan and Schwartz 1986:684). Hence, not always strong social networks have a deterrent effect on crime. Following the later findings, a second part of our hypothesis is that while extended social networks are present in Argentine shantytowns, they do not

have a deterrent effect on street harassment.

Although we part from social disorganization theory, we also make some qualifications to this perspective. One important qualification results from the fact that shantytowns in Latin America have historically been internally cohesive and organizationally strong, due to the roles played by local political leaders and networks of mutual trust based on kinship and common migratory origins (Roberts 1995; Villareal and Silva 2006). Although some classical ethnographies in the social disorganization perspective have considered the role of local politics (Whyte 1965; Suttles 1968), generally speaking, quantitative studies in social disorganization have seldom taken into account the role of local political leaders in disadvantaged U.S. urban areas. In contrast with this approach, we assume that in Argentina low-income settlements have traditionally had strong levels of cohesion fostered by strong networks of mutual trust and local political leaderships.

Hence, while following the more recent findings in social disorganization theory we propose that kinship and friendship networks are not associated with neighborhood crime, we assume that there is an important relationship between the incidence of street harassment and trust in local political leaders. More precisely, our supposition is that trust in political leaders will be negatively associated with conflictive social bonds, since political organizations foster internal cohesion diminishing the levels of conflict. Hence, our assumption is that while high levels of trust in political leaders would increase internal cohesion and reduce crime, low levels of trust increase internal

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conflicts creating the conditions associated with street harassment.

A second important qualification to the social disorganization approach is that culture also plays an important role in fostering or hampering neighborhood cohesion and hence reducing or increasing the levels of internal conflict. Initially, ethnographic studies in the social disorganization perspective made a strong focus on the effects of culture (conceived as moral order and correspondent value orientations) in the internal levels of social cohesion in low-income areas and their association to the presence of social networks and neighborhood conflict and crime. However, the quantitative tradition developed after the seminal contributions of Sampson and Groves (1989), tended to disregard this dimension. Studies centered mainly on the effects of social networks, but did not pay attention to the cultural conditions that underlie in the forms of social cohesion or conflict that characterize urban areas with low socio economic status. In this study, we make an effort to recover this cultural dimension by considering that ambivalence toward conventional social principles (explained later) may be associated with greater levels of neighborhood conflict and crime.

We will test these hypotheses and underlying assumptions through a survey applied in six Argentine cities. The survey took place in 2005, and measured the association between victimization for street harassment and the extension of social networks and conflictive social bonds in Argentine shantytowns. In the following section, we will explain further the main assumptions in social disorganization theory and the additional contributions to this approach we will try to make in this study. Then, we will describe in more detail the characteristics of the survey and present its main results.

#### **ADDING POLITICS AND CULTURE TO THE SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION APPROACH**

The original version of social disorganization theory proposed that urban enclaves characterized by low socio-economic status, produced higher levels of social conflict that were associated with higher crime rates (Shaw *et al.* 1929; Shaw and McKay 1942; 1966). However, the original version of the theory did not tease out the exact way in which these conditions were associated to each other (Bursik 1988: 521; 1999:86; Kornhauser 1978; Sampson and Groves 1989: 775). Critics of the original version of the social disorganization approach proposed a more consistent

causal structure. In this later perspective, local communities were defined as 'a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes' (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974: 329; Sampson and Groves 1989:777; Bellair 1997: 677). These networks provided informal mechanisms of social control on public space, especially on teenage peer groups, that acted as mediating factor between structural conditions such as low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity and high residential mobility and local delinquency rates (Bursik, 1988:530; Sampson and Groves 1989: 774; Kubrin and Weitzer 2003: 374). The main thesis resulting from this perspective was that structural conditions such as high residential mobility, low-income and racial heterogeneity are associated with low levels of neighborhood cohesion (restricted presence of social networks), scarce informal social control of public spaces and more neighborhood crime.

Research results revealed that the original version of the theory was in need of certain qualifications. Rigorous testing of the relationships between neighborhood networks and crime showed that while in certain circumstances networks could have a deterrent effect on crime, this depended on the kind of resources the former could effectively mobilize (Smicha-Fagan and Schwartz 1986:684; Browning, Dietz and Feinberg 2000; Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). Hence, while certain types of social networks could contribute to crime control and deterrence (Smith and Jarjoura 1988; Patterson 1991), other types of social ties could have no effect (Smicha-Fagan and Schwartz 1986:684) or could even promote crime (Bellair 1997; Bursik 1999; Browning, Dietz and Feinberg 2000).

Our hypothesis is that in the Argentine case friendship and kinship networks are not apt to deter crime, while conflictive social ties are associated with a higher incidence of victimization. According to several studies, after the economic crises of the 1980s and especially 1990s, solidarity networks in Argentine shantytowns became restricted to a limited set of primary ties (Puex 2003; Bonaldi and Del Cueto 2009; 2010; Diez2009). Therefore, they mobilize resources apt to deal with domestic affairs (helping other kin or neighbors to find jobs or to borrow money in times of need), but are not instrumental in dealing with the control of public space. Consequently, public space became more anonymous and reciprocal victimization between members of different parts of the neighborhood more frequent (Rojas 2000; Puex 2003).

We have selected street harassment as an expression of this internal dynamic in shantytowns because the victimization of occasional passers-by is the type of crime more obviously related to a weak informal control of public space and concomitant increase in neighborhood conflicts.

An additional element we consider in this study is the role of local political leaders. Although, quantitative studies in social disorganization do not consider local politics, in most parts of Latin America local political organizations in shantytowns were paramount in fostering cohesion (Roberts 1995:163). Political parties and leaders were very relevant in articulating the demands of shantytown dwellers since their formation; consequently, they reinforced common identities and networks of mutual support. Therefore, in this study we include the role of local political leaders and their incidence on street harassment.

Finally, another important factor concerns the role played by culture. Early ethnographies on social disorganization were based on a rather reductionist view of culture, understanding it mainly as moral orders composed by a fix set of value orientations. This perspective, disregarded other cognitive, emotional and perceptive components of the inter-subjective systems of symbols and meanings that compose a culture. Furthermore, in social disorganization theory there was a rather mechanistic view of how these moral orders intervene in social action. Instead of following Malinowski's (1926) early caveat that social rules and values were just abstract principles that did not 'reign', but were negotiated, in concrete social interaction, early ethnographies in social disorganization theory tended to assume that actors strictly followed value orientations when interacting with other co-subjects. In spite of these limitations, pioneer studies in the social disorganization perspective, as Louis Wirth's (1964) 'Culture, Conflict and Misconduct', significantly contributed to our understanding of how the inter-subjective conditions that characterize poor urban areas may hamper social cohesion, restrain informal control of public space and thus favor neighborhood crime (Downes and Rock, 2003: 61).

Wirth's main argument was that the diversity of migratory origins of those who inhabited these areas and their unfamiliarity with conventional institutions of the larger society (school, job market, etc.) resulted in the coexistence of divergent moral orders and value orientations. This made social behavior difficult to predict beyond a limited set of primary acquaintances.

Therefore, social networks based on mutual trust and reciprocity became restricted to a very limited set of interpersonal ties. Beyond these bonds, co-residents became moral strangers, social behavior became uncertain and unpredictable and thus there was a tendency to respond to more immediate and selfish interests instead of collective goals. This reduced the informal social control of public space, transforming these urban areas in an unstable and insecure environment where people could contingently become victims or perpetrators of crime.

The studies that followed these original contributions instead of delving into them, tended to simplify this initial perspective. The foundational work of Shaw and McKay (1969:170), maintained the idea that contrasting moral orders and value orientations promoted conflict and crime in the segregated urban space. However, in contrast with the original intentions in the social disorganization approach, this divergence was sketched into just two 'differential systems of values': those that matched the conventional order and promoted the integration into the larger society and those associated with the practice of crime that increased the distance from conventional institutions. This idea of just 'two' moral orders in conflict was a simplification to the original idea of cultural diversity present in the early generation of Chicago School scholars. Notably, the tradition of quantitative studies that ensued the contributions of Shaw and McKay, and especially the large number of researches that delved into the work of Sampson and Groves (1989), tended to disregard cultural factors (Kubrin and Weitzer; 2003: 376;379). In spite of the relevance that these factors had in the original version of the social disorganization perspective, none of the quantitative studies that have followed in this tradition has made an effort to measure the inter-subjective dimensions of neighborhood cohesion and crime.

Is difficult to establish the exact reasons for this omission since neither Sampson and Groves, nor the studies that ensued, gave a clear explanation of why they excluded these factors from their research. Our aim is thus to reinstate this dimension as a possible factor influencing the levels of internal cohesion and incidence of crime in poor urban areas. A clear difficulty, which is also a possible a reason for its exclusion from previous studies, stems from the significant challenge that represents measuring these complex inter-subjective conditions through survey variables. Quantitative variables tend to capture rather fixed opinions of an explicit nature, and not the

dynamic and often implicit and inconsistent systems of meaning that compose a culture and constitute the inter-subjective factors that may foster or hinder neighborhood cohesion and crime. Although, we do not claim to have overcome these difficulties completely, we made an effort to include variables that may at least grasp some of the inter-subjective factors that intervene in the levels of neighborhood social cohesion. Instead of assuming that inter-subjective conditions manifest themselves as a fixed moral order and value orientations, we assume that they are, at least partially, manifested as 'subjective attitudes'<sup>1</sup> towards certain principles that may guide, but not completely determine, social action and relationships. These subjective attitudes express themselves as a predisposition of social actors to act according to certain principles, but do not constitute an uncritical adherence to those principles. Therefore, although actors may recognize certain abstract ideals as desirable parameters of social action, they also may manifest certain ambivalence towards them, doubting their effectiveness in concrete contexts of social interaction where personal interests may take prevalence over abstract principles. Therefore, we designed variables that express adherence to what, following previous research, we assumed could compose those idealized principles. Nevertheless, we also designed other variables that express attitudes that are more ambivalent concerning the prevalence of those principles in the 'real world'. With all the aforementioned precautions, our hypothesis partially follows social disorganization theory in considering that ambivalence towards conventional principles would be associated with more conflictive relations among neighbors and a greater prevalence of crime.

This approach does not solve all the problems that come with the intention of 'measuring' culture through survey variables. Many of the implicit cognitive, emotional and perceptive dimensions of culture are not expressed in attitudes towards a limited set of principles. Furthermore, it is hard to find out through survey evidence the exact mechanisms through which these attitudes may influence concrete social interaction (how they turn into actual social practices). However, even with these limitations, as long as we

find an association between a certain attitude towards abstract principles and the type of bond people hold with their neighbors, we may assume that those attitudes and bonds are in some way related. As stated, this approach does not tease out the exact ways in which attitudes and specific types of social ties relate. It is hard to imagine how survey evidence can help us open this 'black box', if it is not complemented with qualitative studies that would help us unveil the connection between what people 'think and do', to use Malinowski's classical expression. Regretfully, this remains beyond the scope of our study. However, by exploring variables that approach the inter-subjective dimension of social ties, we may find possible ways to foresee what combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches may help us grasp more fully the conditions that underlie in neighborhood cohesion and crime.

## THE SURVEY

This study is based on a survey applied in six Argentine cities: Buenos Aires (2,891,082 inhabitants) and its metropolitan area (9,910,282), the city of Córdoba (3,304,825), Mendoza (848,660), Tucumán (586,198) and Tandil (126,300). Interviews amounted to 800 cases for each city, for a total sample of 4800 cases. The sample was representative by social sector in each of the surveyed cities. We used the housing level to establish the socioeconomic status of the population. Then we established the incidence of the different types of housing level in each of the surveyed cities and interviewed a proportional number of residents belonging to each level. Interviews were conducted by an independent surveyor with the head of household (the main provider) or his or her spouse. Interviewers selected the households by randomly choosing one in every three homes on a block, until completing the correspondent quota in each area. The response rate was high: 96% of the selected head of households consented to participate in the survey. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and all participants were assured confidentiality.

<sup>1</sup>We have chosen to speak of subjective attitudes since we understand them as a 'predisposition' to act following a certain principle or ideal. However, this predisposition does not lineally manifest itself in concrete social action, since social actors adapt these principles and ideals to the contingent circumstances in which they act. Therefore, these subjective attitudes partially guide concrete social interaction but do not completely determine it and consequently are not totally expressed in them.

<sup>2</sup>The housing level indicator differentiates socioeconomic status according to the type of residence and the context in which it is located, it distinguishes six levels: (E) houses made with substandard materials located in illegally occupied plots with no city services (shantytowns or *villas miseria* in Spanish); (D) working class houses, old apartments or buildings with two flats without elevators; (C3) low quality houses with two or three bedrooms, state housing projects; (C2) small or medium size houses done with good quality materials, medium cost apartments with elevators; (C1) flats with amenities or houses in residential areas; (AB) big houses with important gardens in expensive residential areas or luxury apartments with amenities.

Street harassment was measured by asking respondents whether they had been solicited for money in the streets of their neighborhood in a compulsory manner in the year prior to the survey. Friendship and kinship networks were measured by asking respondents with how many neighbors within five blocks of their homes respondents exchanged favors or participated in common celebrations (like birthdays, Christmas, etc.). Similarly, we asked with how many family members within five blocks of their homes they exchanged favors or participated in common celebrations. These questions resulted in the family social networks and friendship social network variables. Conflictive social ties were measured by asking respondents with how many neighbors within five blocks of their homes they had conflicts in the year prior to the survey. The incidence of local political leadership was measured asking how much trust respondents had in local politicians.

In order to consider the cultural dimensions of social cohesion, we designed two set of variables. Following historical research (Sczarella, 1998; Torre y Pastoriza, 2002; Gené, 2005) on the prevalent lifestyles of middle and working classes in Argentina, we assumed that people would attribute significant relevance to work and education as organizing principles in their life. We then designed variables that would measure the attitudes that people had towards these principles by asking how much they agreed with the following statements (measured in a five point Likert scale): 'to have an honest and rewarding job is an important goal in one's life' and 'it is important to study hard in order to prosper and raise a family.' By combining these two questions, we created the 'adhesion to conventional principles' variable. As shown in the descriptive statistics section, over 95 % of respondents in all housing levels agreed that education and work were very relevant goals.

In order to estimate possible ambivalent attitudes towards these same principles, we presented respondents statements that expressed certain skepticism as to the effectiveness of these principles in concrete real life situations. We asked respondents to manifest the level of agreement to the following statements (also in a five point Likert scale): 'In this country [Argentina], it is not worthwhile to be honest and a hard laborer to prosper in life'. 'Nowadays to be witty has greater advantages than to study hard and be perseverant'. We then combined these questions into the 'ambivalence towards conventional principles' variable. An interesting result (showed in the

descriptive statistics section), was that between 30 to 40 % of those who adhered to conventional principles, also manifested agreement to the latter statements. Hence, this combination of variables seems to have captured, at least to a certain extent, the ambiguities that are usually present in the inter-subjective dimensions of social relationships. Finally, we also considered the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample such as gender, age, nationality and family composition. All variables were dichotomized to improve standard errors and significance coefficients.

In Table 1, we present descriptive statistics showing the socio-demographic characteristics of the study's sample and the frequencies of the study's main variables. Then, Tables 2 and 3 present multiple logistic regression models. The first model measures the incidence of conflictive social bonds and of kinship and friendship networks in the probability of being a victim of street harassment (Table 2). The second model shows the influence of demographic variables, trust in political leadership and ambivalent attitudes towards abstract principles in the probability of being involved in conflictive social bonds (Table 3). Given the very high percentage of positive answers in the 'adhesion to conventional principles' variable, for parsimony, we only included the 'ambivalent attitudes' variable since it showed a stronger capacity to discriminate between different groups of respondents. In both tables, we nested individual level cases within housing levels in order to consider the territorial effect of cohesive or conflictive social networks.

### Descriptive Statistics

The study's sample included 2408 (50.1%) females and 2401 (49.9%) males, 3938 (81.9%) were above 30 years of age, while 871 (18.1%) were below that age group. Foreigners represented a 5.7 % (871) and Argentineans a 94.3% (4535) of the sample, while 533 (10.9%) respondents lived in female headed households. In addition, 433 (9%) lived in shantytowns, while 4363 (91%) lived in higher housing levels (working class, middle class and upper middle/high class neighborhoods). Table 1 shows the main demographic characteristics of the sample, comparing shantytown dwellers with the rest of the population. It also shows the incidence of the study's main variables in different housing levels.

Results in Table 1 suggest that, as expected, friendship and kinship social networks have an important presence in all housing levels. An average of

**Table1: Descriptive Statistics**

		Shantytowns (percentages)	Other housing levels (percentages)
Sex	Male	49.7	50
	Female	50.3	50
Age	Below 30	30.7	16.9
	30 or more	69.3	83.1
Nationality	Foreigner	17.6	4.5
	Argentinean	82.4	95.5
Trust in politicians	Trust	23.9	25.8
	Little or no trust	76.1	74.3
Adhesion to conventional principles	Yes	97.4	96.2
	No	2.6	3.8
Ambivalence towards conventional principles	Yes	40.4	33.7
	No	59.6	66.3
Kinship networks	Less than three	63.5	82.9
	Three or more	36.5	17.1
Friendship networks	Less than three	60.3	61.3
	Three or more	39.7	38.7
Conflictive social networks	Less than three	94.2	96.6
	Three or more	5.8	3.4
Street harassment	Non victim	90.8	95
	Victim	9.2	5

over 30% of respondents declared to have three or more neighbors with whom they exchange favors. Kinship networks have a similar incidence in the lower housing level, although they are present to a lesser extent in other housing levels. This confirms our assumption that, contrasting to what classical social disorganization theory reported for US inner cities, in Argentina social networks are equally or more extended in shantytowns as compared to other housing levels.

Another interesting finding is that, as already mentioned, more than 95% of respondents manifested agreement with the statements that express positive attitudes towards work and education. This, however, contrasts with the fact that over 30% of respondents also manifest agreement with the statements that express a more cynical attitude towards these same principles. This ambivalence extends more in shantytowns (reaching 40%) as compared to other housing levels. In addition, we also found that in shantytowns there is lesser trust in local political leaders and there also a higher incidence of conflictive social networks and more street harassment. This

suggests that, consistent with our assumptions, people living in shantytowns face the conditions that are positively associated with conflictive social networks and neighborhood crime and consequently experience them more frequently. However, this is in need of certain qualifications. Although conflicts and crime have a higher incidence in shantytowns, they affect only a minority within them. Hence, while shantytowns seem to reunite the conditions that promote social conflict and crime, they affect a limited number of inhabitants. This suggests that these factors concentrate in rather small groups of neighbors and do not expand equally in the whole area.

### **Social Networks and Street Harassment**

Our main hypothesis was that living in shantytowns and having conflictive relationships with close neighbors associate with a greater chance of being a victim of street harassment. In contrast, friendship and kinship networks would not have a preventive effect on this type of neighborhood crime. Table 2 confirms these suppositions. Demographic factors such as being male, under 30 and a foreigner strongly increment the

**Table 2: Street Harassment**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	3.512* (.129)	3.848** (.162)	3.847* (.171)
Sex (male=1)	.836* (.149)	.800* (.150)	.765* (.150)
Age (below 30=1)	.493** (.156)	.415** (.159)	.369*** (.161)
Nationality (foreigner=1)	.984* (.217)	.843* (.228)	.876* (.229)
Housing level (shanty towns=1)		.405*** (.199)	.415*** (.204)
Kinship networks (three or more contacts=1)			-.182 (.187)
Friendship networks (three or more contacts =1)			-.029 (.147)
Conflictive social bonds (three or more conflicts=1)			.833** (.251)

\*p<.000; \*\*p < .005; \*\*\*p < 0.05 Standard errors in parenthesis.

possibility of being a victim of street harassment. However, if we hold these factors constant, living in shantytowns and being involved in conflictive networks with proximate neighbors significantly increases the chances of being a victim of street harassment. Inversely, kinship and friendship networks do not have a net effect on this form of victimization. Hence, these results confirm our initial and main hypothesis that groups of neighbors that live in shantytowns and hold conflictive bonds among each other are significantly more exposed to being victims of street harassment.

### Politics, Culture and Neighborhood Conflicts

In addition to our main hypothesis, another set of suppositions included in our study were that conflictive networks in shantytowns were associated with lesser trust in political leaders and ambivalent attitudes towards conventional social principles. Table 3 shows that being a male below 30 is associated with greater chances of having conflict with proximate neighbors. Independent of these factors, the level of trust in political leaders also has a net effect on the probability of having conflicts with proximate neighbors. Furthermore, we also found that among those who have ambivalent attitudes towards conventional principles there is a greater incidence of conflicts with proximate neighbors. Therefore, although these variables do not capture the exact way in which attitudes towards work and education lead to more

conflictive relations with proximate neighbors, it shows that there is some kind of association between these two factors. This confirms our assumption that the levels of trust in political leaders and ambivalent attitudes towards conventional principles are in some way related to the levels of conflicts among neighbors, and through this to the probability of being a victim of street harassment.

**Table 3: Conflictive Social Networks**

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	3.660** (.466)	4.134* (.191)
Gender (male =1)	.400** (.156)	.466** (.163)
Age (Below 30=1)	.449*** (.179)	.463*** (.179)
Nationality (Foreigner=1)	-.115 (.348)	-.119 (.349)
Trust in Politicians (little or no trust =1)		.735* (.171)
Ambivalence towards conventional principles (totally agree/agree=1)		.309*** (.158)
Housing level (victim=1)		.543*** (.222)

\*p<.000 ; \*\*p < .005; \*\*\*p < 0.05 Standard errors in parenthesis.

## CONCLUSIONS

Results have confirmed that there is a strong association between living in shantytowns, being involved in conflictive social networks and being a victim of street harassment. However, an important qualification is that even in poor urban enclaves these forms of conflict and crime affect only small minorities. Survey results reveal a low incidence of conflictive networks and street harassment even among shantytown dwellers, hence poor urban enclaves cannot be characterized as dominated by conflict and crime. At least in the Argentine case, conflict and crime coexist with quite extended friendship and kinship networks that exchange favors and engage in common celebrations. Possibly, the long historical tradition of holding cohesive territorial social ties in Argentine shantytowns has resisted even the increasing levels of poverty that affected Argentine society through the 1980s and 1990s.

Another important finding is that trust in political leaders is also associated with neighborhood conflict. This is in line with our supposition that given the role that political parties traditionally played in expressing the collective demands of shantytown dwellers, they have an influence in the levels of cohesion and protection from abusive behavior between neighbors. Hence, the lack of trust in these agents produces greater levels of internal conflict creating the conditions that foster neighborhood crime. Although this insight stems specifically from the Argentine case, it suggests the importance of considering the role of political leadership when measuring the levels or causes of social disorder. Since many classical ethnographies show that also in U.S. inner cities local politics play a role in the internal structure of social ties, adding this dimension in quantitative studies of social disorder seems a good way to advance our knowledge of its causes.

Another relevant finding is that ambivalence towards conventional social principles is also more common in shantytowns and is associated with neighborhood conflicts. Although in the study we could not show how is it exactly that these conditions relate to each other, our findings at least suggest that inter-subjective substrates of social interaction associate to the 'type' (cohesive or conflictive) of social networks that develop between groups of neighbors. As stated, to understand how these subjective attitudes actually connect to the ways neighbors relate to each other would require complementary quantitative and

qualitative research, where direct observation of interaction would help us identify how conflict develops among groups of neighbors who manifest ambivalence towards conventional principles.

In sum, while we confirmed that shantytowns concentrate greater levels of internal conflicts and crime, we also discovered that they affect small proportions of the population even within shantytowns. In addition, we also found that they coexist with important levels of social cohesion expressed in the presence of quite extended social networks. Furthermore, we found that political leadership is an important factor in explaining the levels of internal conflict in deprived urban areas. We also confirmed that subjective attitudes expressing ambivalence towards conventional social principles are associated to neighborhood conflicts. Hence, although social disorganization theory has been instrumental in allowing us to produce appropriate measures of the incidence of neighborhood conflict and its association with local crime, two additional insights result from our study. Initially, internal forms of solidarity may still subsist or be even stronger in contexts of material deprivation. In addition, the role of local politics and inter-subjective dimensions of social ties should be included as intervening factors, since they may have a great say in explaining the levels of conflict among neighbors.

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