

Interpersonal conflict is the strongest predictor of community crime and misconduct

June 2 2015

Neighborhoods with more interpersonal conflict, such as domestic violence and landlord/tenant disputes, see more serious crime according to a new study out today in *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (JRCD). Private conflict was a better predictor of neighborhood deterioration than public disorder, such as vandalism, suggesting the important role that individuals play in community safety.

"Private conflicts, for example, [domestic violence](#) or friendship disputes over money or girlfriends, can and do spill over into public spaces, be it on stoops or street corners, in bars or local parks." reported study authors Daniel O'Brien and Robert J. Sampson of Northeastern University and Harvard University.

Analyzing census reports and geographical data of 911 dispatches and 311 service requests in 121 Boston residential areas from 2011-2012, O'Brien and Sampson found the following relationships across time:

- Neighborhood rates of [interpersonal conflict](#) in 2011 were associated with increases in social disorder (noise disturbances and public intoxication), private neglect (infestation and uncivil use of private property), crime, and physical and [gun violence](#) in 2012.
- Physical disorder (infestation, graffiti, improper disposal of trash) and social disorder were only slightly predictive of future

[violence](#) and further disorder.

- Incidents involving guns in 2011 predicted more homicides in 2012.
- Homicides in 2011 were unrelated to any measures of violence, crime, and disorder in 2012.

"Private conflict and public violence are likely to increase in severity over time, leading to the more consistent use of guns," commented O'Brien and Sampson. "Notably, this progression has been largely invisible to previous work because its primary antecedents occur behind closed doors, out of view of many measurement techniques."

The researchers speculated that people facing stressful conflicts with others may respond violently to issues within their community, neglect private property, and be less inclined to take a stand against neighborhood decline. Such examples of external disorder may also stress individuals in the community, intensifying conflicts within private lives.

More information: This study, "Public and private spheres of neighborhood disorder: Assessing pathways to violence using large-scale digital record", is featured in a special issue of *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, dedicated to the Broken Window Theory.

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: Interpersonal conflict is the strongest predictor of community crime and misconduct (2015, June 2) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-interpersonal-conflict-strongest-predictor-crime.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.