

Cities, Social Pathology, and Deviance Service Centers

A.R. Gillis

Due in part to the timing, volume, and quality of supporting research, the Chicago School's contribution to sociological theory in the first half of the 20th century seems to have been indelibly imprinted on sociologists. This is particularly the case with students of cities and social pathology, who often argue that cities are inherently dangerous, and the bigger they get, the worse they get.

The acceptance of this viewpoint was likely facilitated by preconceptions concerning the evil nature of cities, and in fact, serious crime continues to plague Chicago in the 21st century. However, whether this has already occurred or will the ultimate fate of all cities as they grow is far from certain.

This course begins with a critical examination of Calhoun's experiment linking population density and "social pathology" presented in *Scientific American* in 1963, and the production of "deviance service centers" in cities.

The course also looks at the Chicago School, including recent incarnations by Wilson, Venkatesh, and Sampson, and examines empirically the degree to which Chicago is similar to other US cities, comparable Canadian cities, and Toronto, designated as Chicago's sister city, but located in a different country. The relationship between urbanization and rates of serious crime in Israel will also be discussed.

This section concludes that the Chicago School was clearly on to something, but they overgeneralized their findings. Context and history affect patterns, and segregated and "truly disadvantaged" subpopulations and deviance service centers are not only found in cities.

Indeed, outside of the US, the relationship between urbanization and social pathology seems more often to be negative than positive, in line with the theories of the ideas of Norbert Elias, Steven Pinker, and "civilization theory".

Evaluation will be based on standard policy and procedures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.