EC 137, Prof. Glenn C. Loury, March 15, 2007
Lecture Note on Crime and Community (Anderson/ Meares)

I.   Anderson describes community structure/culture. Meares advocates formal law enforcement that seeks to reinforce informal community controls, as follows:
   A.   Why talk about crime and community? Non-individualistic view of the causes of crime. Community has role in enforcing law-abiding behavior
   B.   Not only (mainly?) individual characteristics, but structures of social interaction, norms of law abidingness, that matter for explaining crime
   C.   Four parts to Meares's discussion:
      1.   Review relevant theory ("social organization theory")
      2.   Law enforcement enthusiasts' argument: (need more law and order)
      3.   Law enforcement skeptics' arguments (massive racial disparity unfair)
      4.   Examine how law enforcement can better mobilize community resource (by strengthening roles of adults [e.g., curfews]; and of churches [e.g., as with Boston's 10 pt. coalition])
   D.   How does community matter:
      1.   Friendship networks influence behavior
      2.   Social capital matters – churches/PTA/teen peer groups, etc.
      3.   So, "lock 'em up" approach can destroy foundations for community controls on crime
      4.   But, skeptics (Tonry) who urge racial redistribution (fewer blacks, as blacks, in prison) are looking in wrong place (state sanctions). Need is not for less law enforcement, but for different enforcement, so as to induce more community control of individuals' behavior
      5.   Recall "moral ecology of community" point from earlier lectures, and Anderson's "decent" vs. "street" values, etc. Meares wants to get behind the "good" people, shore-up the "decent" side of the decent/street dichotomy

II.   Theory
   A. "Poverty causes crime" not quite right; disproved by variation across ethnic groups (all poor) in crime rates
   B. Important finding: persistence over time of high crime rates in same physical places, even as population turns-over
   C. Thus, "place" must somehow "cause" offending
   D. Channels:
      1. Prevalence, strength, interconnectedness of social networks
      2. Residents collective supervision and personal involvement with youth
      3. Cooperation formal/informal social organizations (churches+police)

E. Note: segregation creates link between race and place; poverty more concentrated among blacks. Also, there is link between prisons and race

F. "Culture" important: common values of "decency" are maintained, reinforced, through daily conduct and discourse, "cultural organization." This implies ability to settle on common values in a community is critical

G. Thus, question becomes how can government policy facilitate the communal production of a norm of law-abidingness
   1. gert. Can do good as well as harm
   2. curfew laws good (Meares thinks) for this reason, because they help "decent" people to control environment, but revolving door incarceration bad, because it fosters criminality the norm

III. Pro-Law enforcement Position and it's problems
   A. LE could help produce virtuous cycle of law abidingness. But, it is not sufficient unto itself to achieve this goal.
   B. Racial asymmetry of enforcement undermines this goal in black communities due to:
      1. Stigma: if law abiders stigmatized, their commitment to law-abidingness is undermined
      2. Linked fate: people have empathy for family/friends caught in LE web ("Impossible Dilemma")
      3. Multiple roles: people can be both law abiders and law breakers (hustling to supplement meager earnings, smoking marijuana, etc.)
   C. Anti-LE position and its problems
      1. Paul Butler, jury nullification, exemplifies the "problem"
      2. Affirmative action for blacks in law enforcement makes little sense
      3. Would offset "stigma" and "linked fate" concerns, but ignores:
         a. heterogeneity within minority group
         b. policy vacuums: misses chance to mobilize positive forces in inner city.

IV. What kind of LE can improve social organization
   A. place-centered vision – encourage law-abiding to engage in private social control through norms
   B. three principles:
      1. move disruptions due to LE away from poor communities [watch for racial disparities in a spatial/geographic context]
      2. strengthen hands of adults over youth (curfews/anti-loitering), but within limits
      3. accept that law abider focus may depart from conventional LE strategies (police should work with churches, eg.)