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## THE ECOLOGY OF EVERYDAY URBAN LIFE

We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.

Winston Churchill

Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are.

Ortega y Gasset

The emergence of cities 5,000 years ago marked a revolutionary event in our relationship to place, providing convincing evidence of our ability to control and restructure the physical environment. Since their beginnings, cities have been magnets drawing people to promising opportunities, containers of great cultural and material wealth, centers of innovation, and seats of religious influence. Cities are, however, rife with internal contradictions. In addition to being the source of immense accomplishment, they have been sites of the greatest extremes in living conditions, from luxurious palaces to squalid barrios and ghettos, from secure gated communities to crime-riddled slums. While they generated great economic growth and wealth, they also concentrated hazard in the form of pollution, noise, traffic, and infectious agents. These human-created places have been associated with terms like “placelessness,” “alienation,” and “homelessness.” Apparently, the same city air that makes some free from the tyranny of small-town scrutiny and limited opportunity is a nearly impenetrable prison for others.

Place matters greatly in the modern city. Residents along Village Creek know too well the contradictions of the urban landscape. They experienced most intensely the hazards presented by the Dursban spill, yet were not able to evoke concern from those who could help. This story dramatically captures the reality of the urban space—concentrated hazard for those least able to bear its risks and diminished ability to respond to these hazards effectively because of limited assets. Ironically, those places with more diluted concentrations of the harmful chemical, the areas furthest downstream from the original spill, were the first ones to initiate an orchestrated effort to respond to its risks. This is the essence of the ecology of health in urban spaces—concentrated hazard in areas with limited abilities for protection.

Urban contexts have the power to influence our health. Yet, because we are spatial creatures who have the ability to shape and reshape these spaces, we also have tremendous potential to influence everyday life and health (Lefebvre 1991). This has led some social observers to state emphatically that those who manipulate the physical environment—architects, planners, and developers—have great capacity for good or ill. We owe the cultural map of structural change not to novelists or literary critics, but to architects and designers. Their products, their social roles as cultural producers, and the organization of consumption in which they intervene create shifting landscapes in the most material sense. As both objects of desire and structural forms, their work bridges space and time. It also directly mediates economic power by both conforming to and structuring norms of market-driven investment, production and consumption (Zukin 1991:39).

This chapter examines the nature of these constructed environments and the roles they play in everyday life. We explore architected spaces, how they have changed over time, and the significance of this change on human experience. These interior spaces are particularly important territories because we spend so much time in them, yet we are only beginning to understand their impact on everyday life and health. We then examine urban macro environs, the neighborhoods, communities, and metropolitan regions in which we live with untold and unknown others. While more careful investigations have been done of these macro environs than

of interior spaces, their impact on the health of residents has not been systematically explored until recently. In this chapter the significance of these spatial structures for everyday life is described, and the unique aspects of cities that shape the urban experience are identified. Using a traditional definition of the city, we then identify dimensions of the urban space that vary from one area of the city to another, affecting the quality of life experienced there. We also discuss the role of economics and fear in promoting the varying landscape of hazard. The understanding of urban ecology developed in this chapter is used in Chapter 4 to build a synthetic theory of health and place.

## Micro Environments

### *The Evolution of Residence*

One of the consequences of the urbanization of societies has been the development of a marked separation between public and private spheres. The emergence of the spatial division between public and private has created new opportunities for self-consciousness and self-development (Braudel 1979; Lofland 1973; Tuan 1982). In turn, these new spatial distinctions between public and private satisfy a basic territorial need presented by modern cultures emphasizing individuality (see earlier discussion in Chapter 2). As such, modern urban persons find new places and opportunities for personal growth and development of “rootedness.” In her best-selling memoir *Under the Tuscan Sun*, Frances Mayes (1997) underscores the significance of one form of constructed space—the home as an aspect of self:

I have just bought a house in a foreign country. . . . The house is a metaphor for the self of course, but it is totally real. And a foreign house exaggerates all the associations houses carry. Because I had ended a long marriage that was not supposed to end and was establishing a new relationship, this house quest felt tied to whatever new identity I would manage to forge.

(pp. 1, 15)

From this point, the book weaves an intriguing account of the author's reflections on house as metaphor for self, providing a personal tale of how a change of scenery can both renew and remake lives. It underscores the notion that we are spatial creatures who seek satisfaction of our needs in places, and have deep personal ties to home territory. More than spatial beings, we are place-oriented creatures. Place is the immediate and intimate portion of the lived environment. It is the site or location for events, but it also has more personal significance than serving as a context for experience. Places are locations of felt value; attachment to place is viewed as a basic human need, important for identity and connection (Eyles and Litva 1998). "To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular" (Relph 1976:38). It can be understood as standing for the human interactions which occur in a location, that is, as a representation of lived experience and of the larger life biography of the individual (Fullilove 1996). This link between place and self is thought to have been accentuated with the growth of cities and changes in residential architecture (Tuan 1977, 1982).

The geographer Yi Fu Tuan (1982) suggests that since the eighteenth century in the West, an ongoing process of "interiorization" has occurred in the built environment of cities. In the ancient and medieval city, public and private, exterior and interior, were mixed together in ways we would find quite confusing today. Lofland (1973) describes how we might feel in such spaces:

Too many people crowded into too small a space; too many odors, most of them offensive; too many sights, most of them vile. You can't get away from the beggars and vendors. They accost you wherever you go. You can't escape the crippled limbs, the scarred faces, the running sores. Your person seems never safe from the constant assault of pickpockets. Everything seems jumbled together. Rich and poor, health and disease, young and old, house and business, public and private. All seems disorder. All seems chaos.

(p. 33)

That seeming chaos was gradually eliminated in the industrial city through the use of barriers, both real and imagined. While this process of erecting barriers and more clearly defining territories touched all aspects of city life, it is best exemplified by the history of housing.

Home spaces have deep-rooted significance for all humans. The home is a “backstage area” where people can relax social conventions and enjoy more intimate social relationships. It provides more than shelter. What a house “does supremely well is to make the character of the human world vividly present to the senses and to the mind” (Tuan 1982:52). By erecting barriers to the outside world, it shields the household from the distractions of open, undifferentiated public spaces. It affords a degree of privacy, which comes to be expected and required in modern culture. In providing privacy, it creates the possibility of a distinctively personal world, not only permitting self-development but also reflecting aspects of the self.

Imagine the tyranny of a home without rooms or privacy. American culture encourages intense self-awareness and a strong, even exaggerated belief in the power of the individual. Such values had no chance for developing in the architecture of the past, and in some homes today, it continues to be difficult to achieve because of overcrowding, or poor or older design. In these spatial circumstances the place of the individual in domestic life may be unclear. Certainly, earlier rural farmhouse architecture and the tenement and townhouse structures of cities earlier in this century did not meet these needs. In the city, heavy concentrations of multistoried dwellings, with shared-wall construction, close proximity to public sidewalks, and severe cooling difficulties made for an environment where public and private space could not be easily distinguished. The often family-constructed farmhouse had a different set of problems. While it focused and concentrated on family life, and effectively sheltered the family from the public eye, it often afforded almost no privacy. The rural home brought family together for entertainment, work, and sleep, but the floor plan of these homes made retreat from other family members difficult. It was an architecture that effectively promoted sharing at the cost of individuality and freedom.

The suburban tract house makes privacy far more accessible to many Americans. Interior spaces are functionally segregated, while exterior

spaces are clearly divided into public and private areas, with back yards and front yards serving distinct functions. Public traffic is regulated by limiting through-traffic and by creating natural buffer zones. Additionally, the technology of the modern home permits greater public-space avoidance (TVs, DVD players, video games, cell phones, computers, internet access, e-mail, iPods, etc.) by making it less necessary to leave the home to satisfy needs and desires. It also creates great separation between family members themselves through personalized electronic entertainment. The superiority of suburban living lies in this segmentation of space, which allows the individual to be alone, to explore and deepen their own sense of being. In the isolation of one's house and the privacy of one's room, it is possible to think seriously and at length and to avoid scrutiny (Tuan 1982:181–82).

While increasing spatial segmentation makes for growing self-consciousness and increases personal liberty, there are two potential problems with this feature of modern residential environments. First, as Tuan suggests, this architected liberty allows the self to turn inward, but in so doing it can also become fragmented and lose its sense of connectedness. A sense of self, after all, comes only with a developed sense of society (Cooley 1922). This growing fragmentation of space in neighborhood and home, while potentially satisfying a basic spatial need of modern culture, can go too far. As communities and families turn more and more inward, there is the potential of losing sight of the whole. In such cases, individual tolerance of others may be threatened. Indeed, evidence suggests that the growing segmentation of urban society has promoted the growth of individualism at the expense of intergroup tolerance, public civility, and social capital at the individual and community levels (Fischer 1981; Putnam 2000).

A second negative outcome of this architecture is that it is not available to everyone. Most notably, persons residing in older, poorer areas of the city are likely to find privacy difficult to obtain. It is uncertain whether this situation in and of itself creates developmental problems for those residing in such households. Evidence presented in the last chapter, however, suggests that in such surroundings, children are likely to spend more time away from home in areas less likely to be under the surveillance

of responsible adults (Gove et al. 1979; Mitchell 1971). Under such circumstances, children may be exposed to high environmental risks while at the same time finding typical sources of protection (particularly within the family) less available.

### *The Artificially Constructed Environment*

In addition to the interiorization of urban life and its impact on public and private use of space, the modern industrial period is also characterized by the growing significance of artificially constructed environments. That is, architected spaces regulate not only social environmental experiences, but physical ones as well. As Ralph Taylor has suggested, however, “nature is a basic human need” (Gallagher 1993:20). Countering that need is the fact that almost all of our time is spent away from the natural world. Indeed, time-use surveys report that, on average, American adults spend a little more than an hour outside in an entire day, with the other 90 percent spent in buildings and vehicles (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1999; Robinson and Godbey 1997). That figure represents a significant change from the past, where more time was spent in public places and outdoors to carry out daily activities (Tuan 1982).

What are the consequences for everyday life and health of this shift to a predominantly artificial environment? Winifred Gallagher (1993) suggests that the shift to architected settings can have great impact on our emotional and physical well-being. This impact is perhaps most pronounced in extreme environmental conditions:

“You look around Anchorage in July, and you could be in a lot of places,” says John Booker. The window of his office at the university duly frames the very picture of the idyllic American campus. . . . “If you saw how much trouble it is to maintain the population here a few months from now, however, you would understand that this is a fairly artificial environment, and the farther north you go, the more that’s true. Maintaining a business-as-usual nine-to-five attitude here in December puts us at odds with what’s going on outside to an

extreme degree, as well as requiring a lot of money and effort. To keep a half a million people in Alaska year round is something like operating in an outpost on the moon.”

(p. 40)

While advanced technologies permit us to live in even the most forboding circumstances, research suggests that the more a population lives in conflict with what is actually happening in nature, the more cases of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) it is likely to have (Lurie et al. 2006). Persons with seasonal affective disorder experience clinical depression seasonally, most frequently in winter, with some cases recurring in the summer. Researchers link variations in light and temperature to the depressive symptomatology that accompanies SAD (Bernson 2002; Magnusson 2000). The most effective treatment for winter-based SAD is light therapy, in which patients are exposed daily to bright artificial light for brief periods. In many cultures, light is associated with positive qualities, while darkness with negative ones. The Shakers had a deep appreciation of the tie between light and well-being, painting walls white and using groups of large windows to maximize natural light. “Good and evil are typified by light and darkness. Therefore, if we bring light into a dark room, the darkness disappears, and inasmuch as a soul is filled with good, evil will disappear” (Eldress Aurelia Mace, quoted in Gallagher 1993:47). As Shaker architecture suggests, built environments can effectively regulate and supplement lighting conditions and affect mood, but how many buildings in contemporary society do this well? While indoor lighting can easily be regulated, not enough is known yet about lighting design for health promotion, a fact that takes on added significance as new forms of lighting are being introduced to promote energy conservation (Frumkin 2003).

Temperature can also be regulated. This regulation can be important under extreme conditions, because cold has the effect of stimulating behavior, while heat acts as a sedative (Gallagher 1993). When cold, we feel compelled to keep muscles moving in order to stay warm, while heat seems to urge muscles to rest. The interiorization of space use thus can reduce the behavioral consequences of extremes in temperature. But the

impact of heat regulation on SAD is unclear at present. While some have argued that summer's heat may trigger mechanisms in the body that mimic symptoms of depression (extreme fatigue, lack of energy, increased need for sleep), this conclusion is controversial (Gallagher 1993; Wehr and Rosenthal 1989). Indeed, some argue that those experiencing depression in summer months may have mood slumps. Their need to escape the heat leads to light deprivation from being indoors for longer periods of time, rather than to a direct physiological response to the heat outdoors.

The interiorization of living environments appears to give a false sense of control over nature, and produces a feeling of being apart from it. Nature is somehow that which is out there. Yet while urbanization and interiorization have effectively removed nature from most of our daily experiences, the human species evolved in a natural world. Nature not only is a human need, it is diminishing in terms of its availability.

The growing separation from the natural world is but one health-related issue wrought by interiorization. As the technology surrounding architected spaces has expanded, new substances and new mechanical and electronic devices have been introduced into the home. This creates the potential for new, though little understood, health challenges. In recent years worries about building materials have risen, with special concern being given to the materials contained in older homes. Asbestos removal became a national priority as the link between asbestos and cancer was established. Lead toxicity also became a critical public health issue, particularly for children. The negative effects of lead poisoning for children include reading and learning disabilities, lowered IQ, hyperactivity, neurological deficits, kidney and heart disease, as well as speech and language handicaps. These hazards are most highly concentrated in older, poorer neighborhoods (Aldgate et al. 2004; Costello-Wilson et al. 2005; Hack et al. 2005). That concentration is precisely why a known public health problem identified in the 1960s did not begin to be addressed until much later (Harvey 1997). As Harvey notes, economic dynamics fashion a logic of injustice: "The costs of lead removal would either drive rents up or render inner city landlordism for the poor so unprofitable as to exacerbate already serious problems of housing

abandonment in inner city areas” (p. 89). Defiance of this logic requires the dissemination of information as well as political action. Getting the word out effectively on the risks associated with these materials, and the testing and treatment available, will depend in part on neighborhood social networks and the level of attachment that people have with certain places.

Growing interest in the “sick building syndrome” has focused attention on indoor air quality as a health determinant (Burge 2004; Frumkin 2003). Air quality is a problem in both old and new buildings (Roodman and Lenssen 1995). Dust in the home and workplace is a significant carrier of toxins. Dust particles contain a range of materials including pet dander and human skin, fibers, insects, mold spores, pollen, dirt, and various soil components and contaminants. It is currently estimated that two-thirds of these noxious materials come from sources outside the home (Layton and Beamer 2009). In recent years, however, the issue of indoor air quality has focused on materials incorporated into new home construction. Evidence is accumulating that a range of building materials can have a significant negative impact on health. Glues, paints, and sealants often emit harmful gases, so that the use of products and materials with high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can produce health problems for residents. Plywood in cabinets and flooring often contains formaldehyde that can be released into the air, while carpeting and padding containing manmade fibers often release harmful gases. Canada has developed incentive programs to minimize the use of these materials in domestic construction; the United States, however, has not followed its lead.

### **Macro Environments: Cities as Unique Environments for Living**

Just as the house presents unique opportunities and challenges for human development and health, cities are distinct contexts with their own health implications. An underlying assumption of many urban sociologists has been that cities were unique environments for living and that the city’s distinctive features shaped the experience of urban residents. The most famous articulation of this perspective was Louis Wirth’s 1938

article “Urbanism as a Way of Life.” Wirth defined cities as large, dense, permanent settlements of socially heterogeneous individuals. He believed that these three qualities of the urban space produced an environment with greater potential for anonymity, social isolation, and impersonalization. Urban spaces had the potential for promoting pathological behaviors and unhealthy places.

While considerable research and writing following Wirth’s original article provided only mixed support for his characterization of the city as a pathological environment, the sheer immensity and diversity of urban communities was believed to have real consequences for everyday life (Fischer 1975; LaGory and Pipkin 1981; Reiss 1959). City experiences were fundamentally different from suburban or rural ones in several ways:

1. *Complex patterns of interaction.* The urbanite has the possibility of initiating an enormous number of social ties, given the high density of urban settlements (Fischer 1975; Milgram 1972).
2. *Exposure to strangers.* Because of the large number of residents and their diverse characteristics, urbanites share the community with many unknown others (Lofland 1973).
3. *Exposure to unconventional norms.* The scale and heterogeneity of urban life is also likely to foster opportunities to explore unconventional behavior patterns and ideas (Fischer 1975).

The significant scale of urban settlements can make social life more stimulating and complicated. Stanley Milgram (1972) talks about the implications of urban complexity for everyday life, arguing that it creates the potential for a unique pattern of public behavior. Urban stimuli can be overwhelming, with sights, sounds, and smells coming too fast to be processed effectively by residents—as a result *stimulus overload* is possible. Humans’ ability to process information is physiologically limited. It follows, then, that the city resident’s capacity to recognize the potentially large number of fellow urbanites is limited. The “overloaded” urbanite is unable to absorb all the information from this complex environment either because there are too many stimuli to process or because stimuli are

coming too fast. When such overloads occur, the urban resident copes, Milgram believed, by selectively reducing stimulus inputs. This can result in a lifestyle of seeming indifference, particularly in public places where individuals may feel especially vulnerable. Coping with complexity may mean ignoring the countless unknown others who share public space.

The blank, nearly expressionless faces of urban pedestrians provide one example of this adaptive ability. For urbanites, most of the people sharing public space with them, whether it be a subway, sidewalk or market place, are nonpersons to be maneuvered around.

(LaGory and Pipkin 1981:39)

The stance of indifference may also produce a situation of *diffused responsibility* and inaction in a situation that normally would command immediate response. One often-used example of diffused responsibility is that of Kitty Genovese, a young woman who was raped and fatally stabbed outside her Kew Gardens apartment in Queens. While at least 38 people witnessed the attack, no one called police until 35 minutes after the assault began, despite the fact that many witnesses watched from the safety of their own apartments. One explanation of this pattern of non-response is that the large size characteristic of urban settings falsely reassures people they have no moral responsibility to respond to someone else's crisis because others are likely to take responsibility. In short, the scale of urban contexts, like the Kew Gardens residential complex in Queens, tends to shift responsibility from the individual to the aggregate. Darley and Latane's study of bystanders (1970) suggested that urbanites are not typically uncaring about other's troubles. However, when an incident occurs, witness behaviors appear to be a function of the size of the crowd. That is, the more witnesses, the less likely that someone will intervene. This stance of non-response is often characteristic of urban areas with heavy concentrations of poor minorities (Suttles 1968; Wilson 1996). Such evidence reinforces Wirth's view of the city as impersonal and alienating. It has been suggested, however, that these outcomes are not inevitable.

Indeed, there are circumstances in which the urban context actually serves to promote a sense of belonging, shared identity, and responsibility. Fischer (1976) argues convincingly that urban scale, instead of destroying social ties among residents, actually has the capacity to create and stimulate social bonds. He claims that large size promotes intense and varied social worlds in several ways:

1. Large communities attract migrants from a wider area than smaller communities. The wider the range of places from which migrants come, the greater the probability they will have diverse experiences and cultural backgrounds.
2. Large size produces greater structural differentiation in the form of highly specialized occupations and institutions, as well as special interest groups. Each of these special groupings has its own unique set of life experiences and interests.
3. Increased size, however, does more than simply stimulate diversity and a variety of social worlds. It provides a critical mass that actually intensifies subcultural experiences and promotes a strong sense of community identity. This critical mass transforms what would otherwise be a small group of individuals holding steadfastly to a set of beliefs and traditions into a vital, active subculture. For a culture to survive, certain minimal numbers are necessary to support the institutions that give the group its identity. In the case of an ethnic enclave this may simply mean enough people to staff the specialty shops, churches, newspapers, and clubs that service and sustain the group.

This tendency to promote diverse, small, and even unconventional social worlds is enhanced by the city's spatial structure. Contemporary cities are segregated places, and this segregation makes unconventional behavior possible by removing the smaller community from the social controls and expectations of the larger, more traditional society and its majority population.

The city's spatial organization, with its distinct pattern of sociospatial landscapes, creates a more personal world than that envisioned by Wirth

and Milgram (LaGory and Pipkin 1981). Tightly segregated local communities, places with a distinct sociocultural identity, can actually reduce the possibility of social isolation and alienation if what Taylor (1988) refers to as “territorial functioning” occurs within them. At the same time, these very settings (highly segregated and densely populated areas with high territorial functioning) may promote cultural isolation and discourage the formation of ties and identities outside the local area. The very same segregation that can be liberating for those with physical, economic, and intellectual resources can be debilitating for those with limited resources (Davis 1990; Massey and Denton 1993; Mitchell and LaGory 2002). That situation of high segregation and limited personal resources can create special problems for those living in areas of concentrated poverty. Segregation places real spatial boundaries on the free flow of information and social interaction. It can actually accentuate and intensify the poverty experienced by individuals, a point we explore later in this chapter.

This structuring of diversity via segregation presents particular problems for city residents as they venture out of their private residential worlds (homes and neighborhoods) into the larger public arena. Urban public space presents its occupants with a potential crisis of knowing (Lofland 1973). To carry out our daily activity in an orderly fashion, and to feel secure in settings populated by many personally unknown others, individuals must be able to anticipate answers to two related questions: (1) What do others expect of me in this setting; and (2) What can I expect of others here? Because the urbanite has no personal knowledge of the countless others sharing public space, they rely on established rules for coding and defining these unknown persons. The rules derive from cultural stereotypes triggered by spatial and appearance-based information. How a person looks, what they are wearing, where they are located, as well as the individual’s body language give cues that people use to provide information about the other’s expectations, intentions, and more. Fashion becomes a key ingredient in the public behavior of metropolitan residents. Clothing colors, styles, materials, and brands, along with body markings and hairstyles, communicate volumes about the personally unknown. In addition to fashion, certain physical qualities of individuals

are stigmatized (Goffman 1963), such as evident disability, disfigurement, racial differences, age, and hygiene. Taken together these become representations of the inner intentions and the personal qualities of the stranger. Hall (1966) and Lofland (1973) also note the importance of spatial cues in communicating intentions. Where persons place themselves in public space (an alley versus a square), their stance (standing, sitting, lying down), and the distance they keep from others are non-verbal communications that suggest the rules of engagement, and the expectations and intentions of others.

Besides these methods of negotiating public space, a process of privatization has occurred to some types of public spaces over the last several decades. The most notable is the privatization of concentrated retail business districts in the form of large covered malls. In these privatized spaces, access is controlled and well surveilled, providing a sense of security less available in downtowns (Davis 1990). These spaces are socially sanitized, homogenized spaces, legally capable of excluding socially stigmatized and disruptive elements. Mall shoppers will not find pathways littered with the pallets of the homeless, no beggars will accost them, no signs of political protest will be found. Because of this security, such places have drawn considerable pedestrian traffic away from traditional public districts in cities. Shopping centers now account for the majority of annual retail sales in fixed-space shopping venues, and the number of these centers has increased tenfold since the 1960s (Gottdiener 1994; Jacobs 1984). This retail restructuring further accentuates the already segregated nature of urban space, since most are located in the suburbs. Metropolitan areas are characterized by divided spaces and segregated places. These divisions often make it difficult to conceptualize a singular urban place because space is multidimensional.

### **The Dimensions of the Urban Mosaic**

The urban space is distinctive because of the sheer scale and diversity contained within it. But because of the segregation that pervades this space, not everyone experiences urbanism equally. Obviously, residents of Village Creek do not come into contact with the same Birmingham as

persons living in the metropolitan area's outlying suburbs. Indeed, while the Dursban emitted from the downtown warehouse fire flowed through both inner-city Village Creek neighborhoods and outlying suburban communities, the experiences and responses to that incident varied by place.

### *Social Areas*

The city is a mosaic of distinctive places, and the characteristics of these places can play a vital role in the everyday life of residents and the community as a whole. In the next part of this chapter we explore the nature of this mosaic of places (its dimensions and geometry) and its potential impact on community and individual experiences.

One of the distinctive features of cities is their spatial structure. Space is what keeps everything from being in the same place, and in so doing, space greatly differentiates urban life. People's experiences in a metropolitan area are shaped by a variety of contextual factors or dimensions linked to spaces. As already suggested, the urban qualities of space can be characterized as scale (size and density) and diversity. These qualities of urbanness, however, vary by place. Different places in the mosaic afford different levels of scale and diversity; the diversity of places is a function of the social characteristics of its occupants and the uses to which the space is put. Research and theory in urban sociology suggest several social characteristics by which neighborhoods may be segregated in contemporary metropolitan areas (LaGory et al. 1980; Shevky and Bell 1955). These dimensions include socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and age/family status, though each is somewhat independent of the other. These independent social components of place allow for a variety of dimensional combinations, producing many unique social spaces and social experiences (e.g. high-status young White neighborhoods, high-status young African American neighborhoods, etc.).

While there is some disagreement over the factors affecting the quality of participation in different places, social area analysis contends that the neighborhood context, composed of a unique combination of neighborhood social characteristics, creates a "climate" for interacting with

neighbors (Bell and Force 1962; Greer 1956, 1960; Greer and Kube 1972; Greer and Orleans 1962; LaGory and Pipkin 1981). In essence, the degree to which people are segregated according to these dimensions is evidence of the strength of a particular “social climate” in the neighborhood. It not only shapes the personality of a place, but also encourages distinctive patterns of local interaction.

Social climate, by affecting patterns of local association, influences the degree of community attachment—an indicator of the significance of local place in the person’s everyday life. Greer’s (1956, 1960) early work on social areas demonstrated clear differences in patterns of neighborhood interaction between places characterized by large numbers of households with a married couple and children (high-family-status areas), and places characterized by single-person households, or households consisting of a couple with no children (low-family-status areas). High-family-status area neighbors define close-knit local ties as a critical feature of neighborhood life; residents of these places participate actively in the local area. They interact with neighbors more, have more neighborhood friends, and participate more in local voluntary organizations. Those in low-family-status areas, on the other hand, see locations near amenities and work, and neighbors who keep to themselves, as critical ingredients of a good neighborhood. As might be expected, people in these areas are less likely to develop friendships with neighbors. They are more likely to see the neighborhood as a location, rather than a place of social attachment. Work by Bell and Boat (1957) and Greer (1956) further confirms the importance of these contextual characteristics. Social participation in the local area is a product of social context and not just the individual’s personal characteristics (Fischer and Jackson 1976; Sampson 1988). For example, while not all neighbors in a high-family-status area will have large families or will even be married, their participation behavior will have more in common with others in the neighborhood than their family-status equals in other types of neighborhoods (Timms 1971).

Two other characteristics of neighborhoods have been shown to affect the level of place attachment—neighborhood residential stability and the neighborhood’s location in the metropolitan space. Residential stability,

the average length of time residents have lived in the neighborhood, appears to be important to the number of local friendships, the degree to which people feel attachment to the local area, and the extent of participation in community activities (Sampson 1988). People who have been in a neighborhood longer are likely to have more local friendships and social supports, and these place linkages, in turn, strengthen the residents' sense of community attachment and territorial functioning. Hence, areas in transition may also create a climate of "placelessness" or rootlessness.

In addition to the social characteristics of the neighborhood, its residential stability, and social climate, location is important for neighborhood interaction (Fischer and Jackson 1976). Suburban areas further from the center have higher levels of local participation. While social-area analysts look exclusively at the role of social characteristics in affecting the local experience, location has long been considered an important aspect of the social space. Local intimate ties exhibit a gradient effect. Geographers have shown that residents' potential ties are conditioned by location, with the probability of local social contact affected by the level of contact opportunities (residential densities, level of territorial functioning, extent of physical barriers to interaction, etc.). These contact opportunities often vary by location (LaGory and Pipkin 1981). Although location seems to matter less than ever before in terms of defining the social networks and supports people use in their everyday lives, place still matters. For all social classes, strong ties fall off as distance away from the individual's residence increases (Fischer and Jackson 1976). Distance is a particularly important issue in areas with limited transportation options.

### *Location Models*

For many years urban ecologists devoted a great deal of attention to the structure of the urban mosaic and the location of social areas within the metropolis. The research concluded that metropolitan areas were organized into a collection of distinctive social and economic spaces. This segregation was multidimensional, with a predictable pattern to the location

of places in the urban space. The earliest models of the industrial city portrayed urban areas as consisting of segregated residential spaces organized in distinctive zones or districts. The concentric zone model depicted a central urban area where slums were concentrated around a business and industrial district (Park et al. 1925). The quality of residential areas varied by distance from this central area of commerce, with the status of neighborhoods increasing in successive bands away from the center. According to this view, the deterioration of residential areas is a direct result of expanding economic activity at the city center. Slums emerged near prosperous business areas because land speculators allowed residential areas to deteriorate in anticipation of making higher profits on the land in the future as a non-residential property. In addition, encroaching businesses increased the hazards to residents by attracting more traffic and introducing more noise and pollution into the area. Hence, the environmental risks associated with growth tended to accrue disproportionately in the area immediately surrounding the central business district. Later models of the industrial city disputed the impact of the central business district on residential arrangements (Hoyt 1939) and suggested that the metropolis contained multiple centers of concentrated economic activity (Harris and Ullman 1945). While these models disagreed with the single-center view of urban development, all depicted a situation in which poverty concentrated around areas of economic activity associated with significant environmental hazards such as manufacturing and warehousing districts. In addition, these concentrations of poverty seemed to serve as buffer zones between certain hazardous areas and higher-status residential groups.

Metropolitan regions are no longer dominated by a single economic center. Indeed, suburban rings often display heavy concentrations of businesses, jobs, and office buildings surrounding shopping malls. These so-called "edge cities" are the high-growth areas of the contemporary metropolis, yet they bear little resemblance spatially to the central business districts that were the economic centers of past urban forms. They are not always characterized by a dense collection of high-rise buildings, they are not usually politically organized, nor do they have clearly defined centers and edges (Garreau 1991). Perhaps the most notable distinction,

for our purposes, between the modern urban space and earlier structures, however, is in the social and economic processes that produce areas of concentrated poverty in the new post-industrial metropolis.

The development process is sometimes far less patterned in post-industrial cities than in the earlier industrial cities described by Chicago School sociologists. Michael Dear (2002) refers to post-industrial development as “Keno capitalism,” a game of chance.

Capital touches down as if by chance on a parcel of land ignoring the opportunities on intervening lots . . . The relationship between development of one parcel and non-development of another is a disjointed, seemingly unrelated affair. While not truly a random process, it is evident that the traditional, center-driven agglomeration economies that have guided urban development in the past no longer generally apply.

(Dear 2002:24)

Just how patterned or unpatterned development is in post-industrial cities is debatable (see the inaugural edition of *City and Community*, Dear 2002, 1:5–58). What is not debatable, however, is that slums and deteriorating neighborhoods are no longer a product of center-driven economic expansion, but of a loss of work in certain areas of the city (Wilson 1996). The high-poverty areas of contemporary American cities have experienced a steady loss of the type of work that their residents are capable of performing. The global economy characterized by flexible production and the growth of producer services fuels the expansion of edge cities at the expense of the urban core (Dear 2002; Greene 1997; Sassen 2000). This flexible production also leads to areas that experience quick turns of fortune from boom to bust.

While inner-city areas in industrial societies have always featured concentrated poverty, for the last several decades there has been an increase in the concentration of African American poverty and joblessness in the inner city and some older suburbs. As Wilson notes (1996), a neighborhood containing poor employed people is a different place from one with poor and unemployed residents. This is the distinctive feature of

post-industrial ghettos—high levels of poverty and unemployment. Economists began to notice a trend in this direction as early as the 1950s, when traditional urban manufacturing and retail activities began to decentralize. By the next decade they were writing about the growing mismatch between jobs and the skills present in residential areas nearest these opportunities (Kain 1968). Kain suggested that the levels of underemployment and unemployment in predominantly African American inner-city areas were growing because of this spatial mismatch. The lower-level skills of the inner-city labor force contrasted with the high skill levels required of job categories growing fastest in the center city (banking, administrative, and communication-related activities). Since the 1970s, large American metropolises have experienced a dramatic polarization of social space, with large principal cities developing dramatic concentrations of ethnic poverty and joblessness (Morenoff and Tienda 1997). Paul Jargowsky (1997, 2003) demonstrates the pervasive nature of this intensifying concentration of the poor in principal cities, ethnically segregated neighborhoods. His review of census tract data for the United States from 1970 to 2000 reveals the dimensions of this spatial polarization:

1. While the number of poor in metropolitan areas grew by 37 percent during these 20 years, the number of poor residing in high-poverty neighborhoods (tracts with 40 percent or more of total households below the poverty line) rose by 98 percent.
2. The number of poor persons living in high-poverty neighborhoods nearly doubled, from 1.9 million to 3.7 million.
3. The number of high-poverty neighborhoods more than doubled, suggesting the spread of urban blight.
4. Urban poverty concentration varied dramatically by race. The greatest concentrations of urban poverty were for African Americans.
5. One out of every three African American poor now lives in high-poverty neighborhoods, while only 6 percent of poor Whites live in highly concentrated areas of poverty.
6. By 1990, half of all high-poverty neighborhoods were Black ghettos. Almost all of the growth in high-poverty neighborhoods took place in principal cities.

7. While the concentration of minority poverty eased somewhat in the 1990s (Jargowsky 2003), recent economic and housing changes associated with the worst recession since the Great Depression have exacerbated problems for the urban poor, leading to a continuation of the trend toward ever-expanding high poverty ghettos (Kneebone and Berube 2008).

This tendency toward the growth of high-poverty neighborhoods is significant because in such places people must deal not just with their own poverty, but with the poverty of those around them. The high degree of stress associated with personal poverty is thus magnified by a contextual effect—a situation with obvious consequences for the physical and mental health of residents. Daily life for the high-poverty ghetto resident is characterized by the confluence of personal and contextual stressors associated with impoverished lifestyles and racial discrimination (Smith 1988).

Although the new urban sociology downplays the distinctive nature of the metropolis's inner-city and outer-city areas (Dear 2002), with much being made of the fact that suburbia is not a singular homogeneous place, real differences remain in the social areas of the city. The deconcentration of the metropolitan region is a reality linked directly to economic and political forces in late American capitalism (Gottdiener 1985) and the global economy (Sassen 2000). The shift of industrial jobs from the central city to the suburbs, to the Sunbelt, and to foreign countries has accentuated the divisions between inner city and outer city (Jargowsky 1997; Wilson 1996). The deconcentration of the metropolitan region stands in sharp contrast to the heavy concentration of minority poverty.

Where people live in the deconcentrated metropolitan region makes a difference in their own health and welfare. The metropolis is a highly segregated place consisting of many distinct social areas. The scale of life and the social characteristics of residents vary widely. These factors affect the social climate and ultimately the level of attachment people have to the local residential space. In turn, various places in the metropolis afford different access to resources and opportunities and different levels of exposure to hazard. Together, these differences create a mosaic of social

and health experiences in the metropolitan region—a wide and very visible divide.

### Capitalism and Landscapes of Hazard and Despair

The divided landscape of the contemporary city is a consequence of powerful social and economic forces. Places are social spaces transformed by users not only into areas of everyday interaction but also into commodities. That is, not only do the neighborhoods and houses of residents have intrinsic value as the home where people live and carry out their daily lives, they also have value as a commodity to be bought and sold in the real estate market. Various locations have both “use value” and “exchange value” (Lefebvre 1974; Logan and Molotch 1987). In some sense, this is one aspect of the distinction between place and space—place being a complex *phenomenon* intertwining personal, cultural, and social factors, and space being a *container* of objects and locations with measurable dimensions. Exchange value and use value, however, are not merely complementary views of the same thing; rather, they are competing ways of valuing locations. This conflict plays itself out in metropolitan areas in ways that do more than constrain the choices of friends and role models in neighborhoods. It literally shapes the urban landscape, determining the location of activities, resources, hazards, people, and ultimately the life chances attached to residents in various segments of the urban mosaic. Its consequences can be catastrophic for some.

The link between urban space and markets is ancient, but as Logan and Molotch (1987) point out, the commodification of place in the United States represents a near-idealized version of capitalism’s transformation of the urban landscape. While the early industrial period promoted urban growth and linked markets to places, as capital became more portable in the global economy the idea of place has been trivialized (Zukin 1991). The use value of place yields to its exchange value in this economy, and exchange value is determined by forces in a placeless, often unregulated global realm. The same industrial product can be produced now in a variety of places throughout the world, so the jobs involved in manufacturing these products can also be quickly shifted. As Zukin

(1991) suggests, this is the basic problem confronting modern communities—capital moves, communities do not. As capital decouples from place, spaces become commodities responding to ever-shifting international economic forces. Capital shapes and controls the urban ecology. Ultimately the same forces that built an urban space can destroy it, and residents can do little about it except move.

At the heart of modern capitalism is energy of creative destruction (Schumpeter [1934] 1961). Capitalism involves recurrent innovation, innovation which leaves in its wake a pattern of destruction in which “capital creates and destroys its own landscape” (Zukin 1991:19). Thus, in addition to referring to the metropolis as a mosaic of social worlds, we can describe it as a landscape of uneven development with enormous discrepancies in the socioeconomic conditions of the city’s social areas. Cities are acutely polarized places, divided up into “fortified cells of affluence and places of terror where police battle the criminalized poor” (Dear 2002). The structural reorganization of center-city economies touches most directly the lives of people already poor. As low-skill jobs decline dramatically with economic restructuring, economic deprivation accelerates in those areas that in the past may have been contiguous to development. This deprivation not only changes the opportunity structure in these areas, but also transforms their social climate. Places that have experienced a decline in low-skill jobs are eventually touched by higher crime rates and a general environment of violence (Shihadeh and Ousey 1998). In this sense, the undulations and rhythms natural to capitalism produce devastating ecological changes, creating the context for fear, hopelessness, and placelessness.

The link between the ecology of opportunity and the ecology of hazard is deeply entrenched in global capitalism, shaping landscapes of fear and despair. One of the best predictors of the location of toxic waste dumps in the United States is the geographical concentration of people of low income and color (Harvey 1997). Chicago’s Southeast Side is a case in point. A predominantly African American area with more than 150,000 people, it has 50 commercially owned hazardous waste landfills and more than 100 abandoned toxic waste dumps. Not surprisingly, it also has one of the highest cancer rates in the United States (Bullard 1994).

The environmental justice movement draws direct attention to the nature of the problem. Harvey (1997) reviews the political-economic dynamics of this concentration of hazard. First, the location of toxic dumps is less costly in low-income areas and also has less impact on property values in these places. Second, a small transfer payment to cover the negative effects of location may be significant to the poor, while basically irrelevant to the better-off. This situation is particularly paradoxical because the rich are unlikely to give up an amenity at any price, and the poor, who can least endure the loss, are likely to give it up for a mere pittance. Third, the poor generally live in areas with weak political organization and hence are unable to resist the relocation of health-depriving hazards. These economic forces obviously produce environmental injustices and a vastly uneven terrain of hazard and risk in cities. Not only is the world a more hazardous place than ever before, but these dangers tend to be more spatially focused. The concentration of hazard, noted by urban ecologists since the 1920s, has increased in the last 30 years in American cities.

The accelerating and spatially deepening uneven processes of “creative destruction” leave urban communities uprooted and displaced while propelling others on to new dizzy and commanding heights. . . . For the privileged—who are able to benefit from new technologies, new multimedia and modes of communication— movement, access and mobility have been augmented. . . . Meanwhile, there are those on the receiving end of this process—like the impoverished, the aged, the unemployed . . .—who have increasingly been imprisoned by it.

(Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1997:12)

While hazard and danger have concentrated in high-poverty ghettos, fear has concomitantly intensified in middle-class areas. This divide, and the ecology of fear that it perpetuates, are precisely what Wilkinson (1996) had in mind when he talked about unhealthy postmodern societies. Understanding the shape of this uneven landscape and the processes that underlie it is essential to understanding the patterned

inequality of health. Ultimately, as Wilkinson (1996) notes, it is also essential to understanding and addressing the significant health costs that accrue to wealthy social systems with such disparities.

The dramatic spatial inequality of postmodern American cities has deep consequences for the health of all metropolitan residents. The vast spatial divide between inner and outer city courses like a polluted stream through the very heart and soul of the American metropolis. The result is an “ecology of fear” that pervades urban areas from richest to poorest (Davis 1990, 1998).

The carefully manicured lawns of Los Angeles’s Westside sprout forests of ominous little signs warning “Armed Response!” Even richer neighborhoods in the canyons and hillsides isolate themselves behind walls guarded by gun toting private police and state-of-the-art electronic surveillance. . . . In the Westlake district and the San Fernando Valley the Los Angeles Police barricade streets and seal off the poor neighborhoods as part of their “war on drugs.” In Watts, developer Alexander Haagen demonstrates his strategy for recolonizing inner-city retail markets: a panopticon shopping mall surrounded by staked metal fences and a substation of the LAPD in a central surveillance tower.

(Davis 1990:223)

Los Angeles is just one example of the consequences of late capitalism’s landscape of creative destruction, where the defense of luxurious lifestyles in the outer regions is translated into a fortified urban ecology where “fortified cells” of affluence are separated from “places of terror” in areas of concentrated, minority poverty (Davis 1990). This is not merely a reproduction of the old ecology noted in urban sociology textbooks from the 1920s through the 1970s; it is brought about by revolutionary economic forces that ruthlessly divide society and intensify in cities the most malevolent aspects of postmodernity.

The “Second Civil War” that began in the long hot summers of the 1960s has been institutionalized into the very structure of the urban

space. The old liberal package of social control, attempting to balance repression with reform, has long been superseded by a rhetoric of social warfare that calculates the interests of the urban poor and the middle classes as a zero sum game.

(Davis 1990:224)

While capitalism plays a critical role in shaping the landscape of fear and hazard in cities, the federal government has also left its imprint on city space. Dear and Wolch (1987) argue that service-dependent inner-city areas have arisen, in part, from the deinstitutionalization movement in North America. Deinstitutionalization was intended to remove the mentally disabled, physically handicapped, mentally retarded, prisoners, and other groups from confining institutional settings and place them in more “normal” residential settings. While well intentioned, it actually flooded local communities with service-dependent individuals. As institutions closed, the people discharged from them gravitated toward specific areas of the city, typically inner-city areas where they found affordable housing. “As dependent persons migrated to those urban locations (often from considerable distances outside the city), they attracted more services which themselves acted as a magnet for yet more needy persons” (Dear and Wolch 1987:4). This process further reinforced the ecology of fear and despair perpetuated by economic forces.

### **How Spatial Structures Affect Our Choices: A Constrained-Choice Approach**

The foregoing discussions demonstrate the importance of place for the everyday experiences of metropolitan residents. While early urban analysts such as Wirth thought that the scale and diversity of urban life would lead to social disorder, that has not yet happened. But a fear of disorder does seem to have emerged at the same time that freedoms and opportunities presented by postmodern economies have been publicly touted. As we have already seen, Tuan (1982) argues that urbanization itself has led to an interiorization of domestic space and growing possibilities for self-development. Expanding choice is often noted as a

hallmark of urbanization (Baldassare 1977), yet choices in the metropolitan area are highly constrained by spatial factors.

Ultimately, most human problem solving requires spatial problem solving. Location is a critical factor in fulfilling needs because traversing space requires the expenditure of resources (energy, time, money). Following this line of reasoning, the city can be seen as a gigantic resource machine in which access to resources is unequally distributed in the urban space. The city is not only a mosaic of social spaces, but also a mosaic of resource spaces. Social and economic resources occur in fixed locations, and thus are more or less accessible to some than to others depending on the distance of these locations from the individual's home. People living in certain places will have greater access to social ties, services, and products than others because of the travel costs, both real and imagined. This so-called "friction of distance" is an important aspect of space's role in the human experience. While the friction of distance has declined dramatically with transportation and communication improvements, space continues to be significant for everyday choices and actions. These constraints are both behavioral and cognitive in character. Space imposes bounds on both our access to resources and knowledge of the resources available. The mental maps people carry around with them represent the horizons of their choice field, which, in turn, are shaped by location. A person born and raised in one section of a metropolitan area, for example, is unlikely to be aware of, or prefer, residential options available in other sectors of the metropolis (Johnston 1972).

To understand how space constrains choice requires knowledge of (1) the spatial dimensions that affect local experiences, and (2) the dynamics of human decision making. Scale and diversity are two essential aspects of the urban space. Both vary greatly across the metropolitan area, impacting the place's social climate by determining the number and type of options available in a given location. How scale and diversity affect a place's social climate and a resident's choices within that residential place is clearer when the parameters of human decision making are considered. Choice theories typically suggest that we make decisions based on a "satisficing" rather than "optimizing" strategy (Cyert and March 1963; Simon 1957). That is, we don't search endlessly for the best

option; rather, we stop when we find something satisfying within the parameters of our preferences and values. In essence, once satisfied, we stop looking for alternatives. This view of choice suggests a potentially important role for spatial arrangements in decision making. Satisficing behavior implies that moving across space requires effort and resources (time, energy, and money). Therefore, if satisfying options can be found nearby, people will make choices without seeking distant alternatives.

But choice involves more than cost considerations. Satisfaction is dependent on the options available and how they fit with our preferences. Two aspects of space, intimately tied to Wirth's notions of the city as place, affect the options available to people: (1) the number of options available in a given place (choice density), and (2) the degree to which these options have the qualities preferred by those choosing. Perhaps the most important type of options offered in a community are the social opportunities available in a place—most particularly the range of available friends. The number of available neighbors governs the number of interaction choices presented in a place. If the choice density of neighbors is high, each individual in the neighborhood will have a higher probability of finding satisfying interactions there. In effect each place has its own “carrying capacity for community ties” (Blau 1994). Sustaining these ties, however, is likely to be a function of how much persons have in common with one another. People who share a salient social identity are likely to share other things—homophily prevails in most social associations (Blau and Schwartz 1984; Lin 2001).

The significance of homophily for patterns of local association, however, is likely to be complicated. While a homophily principle may govern social associations, its effect on local patterns of neighbor interaction may vary, depending on which statuses are homophilous. If the homophilous status signifies great access to resources outside the neighborhood (e.g. high income and education), then dense, status-segregated neighborhoods could encourage extensive ties in the local area, but the ties are likely to be shallow and short term. On the other hand, if the status embodies need (e.g. low income, low education, minority status) then networks may be less extensive (because people have friends here out of necessity), but the ties may be deeper, involving more frequent contact

and greater intensity. Work by Campbell and Lee (1992) on 81 neighborhoods in Nashville substantiates the view that level of need affects the operation of the homophily principle. If, however, a neighborhood is characterized by residents with high need and pervasive fear, social networks may be further truncated. In such places, need and fear reinforce one another, producing detachment and very limited ties inside and outside the neighborhood.

Whatever the permutations, local ecology is important for community dynamics, and ultimately it affects the quality of residential life. The levels of choice density and social segregation vary widely across metropolitan areas, constraining social networks in some places while freeing up social ties in others, ultimately helping to shape the character of places. While some places have characteristics that promote dense and closed networks, others encourage open and wide-ranging social ties. Space matters greatly for the individual's experience, quality of life, and overall health. The spatially constrained choices of individuals accumulate and produce the neighborhood's social climate and its ability to relate effectively with the larger metropolitan institutional structure. In turn, these two factors, *social climate* and *linkages to outside resources*, are critical determinants of a neighborhood's "viability" (Schoenberg and Rosenbaum 1980). Research has demonstrated that the spatial dimension is an essential ingredient in the persistence of African American minority group status in the United States; the heavy concentration of Blacks in high-poverty ghettos has created special disadvantages that intensify the disadvantages of class (Massey and Denton 1993). The flood-ravaged Ninth Ward of New Orleans and Birmingham's Village Creek are but two examples among hundreds nationally of such places and their consequences.

### *Local Friendships*

Table 3.1 considers the effects of spatial structure (choice density and social segregation) on the degree of intimacy within local social networks, other things being held constant. The situation of high homogeneity and wide choice noted in Cell 1 produces a pattern of

*Table 3.1* The Intensity of Local Networks as Affected by Spatial Constraints

<i>Segregation</i>	<i>Choice Densities</i>	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
High	Communal	Sociable
Low	Cosmopolitan	Unattached

*Source:* LaGory 1982:73.

communalism. In its ideal form this may produce a very cohesive social space, with strong social ties and dense social networks. Under conditions of high segregation and dense population, as well as significant socioeconomic constraints, highly localized intimate ties are probable because choice of local friendships is extensive, and potential to make friends of similar background and identity is high. Need intensifies this probability, with persons unable to bear the costs of transportation and communication with outside areas having an even greater likelihood of dense localized networks.

The degree to which these individualized spheres of confidants mesh together to form a strong community bond is highly variable, particularly in communities where the transient population is high. Under such circumstances, the opportunities for interaction may be high. The number of local ties, however, may be low because of limited territorial functioning and the lack of trust in an environment characterized by transience and limited personal knowledge of other neighbors. The presence of a great many strangers increases fear and distrust, which can minimize the potential of an area to produce a strong sense of community. "Fear proves itself" (Davis 1990). On the other hand, if the community is characterized by a small number of transients, then an idealized form of communalism is likely to develop. Under these conditions, the spatial characteristics described in Cell 1 can produce a vibrant local community.

Even under the more preferable circumstance of low transience, however, communal social networks present a difficulty to local inhabitants.

In a communal setting, networks are so tightly knit that there is an absence of “weak ties” (friends of friends) outside the local area (Granovetter 1973a; Massey 1990; Shrum and Cheek 1987). Hence, linkages to outside resources are minimized. As has been demonstrated, weak ties provide essential links to the larger political and economic resources in the metropolitan area and empower communities. These reduced connections to the local and regional power structure inhibit the influence such places can have over their own fate. Thus, even vibrant neighborhoods with strong social and cultural ties face dramatic challenges from the outside unless they have significant resources to resist such efforts.

The second cell represents spatial circumstances common in some suburban and rural fringe areas, as well as in racially segregated urban neighborhoods with high vacancy rates undergoing a period of decline. Here the local community is relatively homogeneous, but the range of intimate friends available is limited by low population densities. As a result, people have the possibility of maintaining local ties, but their ties are unlikely to be either intense (i.e. frequent or intimate) or extensive in character. As stated previously, need promotes this outcome. While residents in general are likely to participate in some neighboring, for those who can afford the costs of transportation and communication, friendships will likely be scattered in many places throughout the urban area (Fischer 1982). For wealthy neighborhoods, then, limited liability (i.e. few local obligations and strong ties) characterizes the social climate of places with Cell 2 spatial characteristics. Low-income neighborhoods, however, are likely to be disadvantaged because residents there will have limited ties to the outside (due to limited access to other areas), as well as the potential for limited local intimate ties due to choice limitations. Low-income and minority-dominated neighborhoods with these spatial qualities suffer from both limited political influence and an atmosphere of limited liability. If the neighborhood is also characterized by high transience, the social climate will exhibit even more detachment.

The circumstances described in both Cell 1 and Cell 2 of Table 3.1 suggest a situation in which those with already limited influence and resources (hyper-segregated minorities) find themselves in residential

contexts that exacerbate their sense of disconnectedness from the larger metropolis. While “communal” spatial conditions can promote a sense of place, residents’ dense social networks potentially neutralize these benefits. Such spatial conditions intensify the already negative effects of poverty and minority status by limiting the weak ties of residents. These ties are essential to accessing personal resource networks. Residents with only a few weak ties, or none at all, lack power and the ability to garner the resources to change their circumstances.

The third and fourth cells of Table 3.1 display neighborhood social patterns that evolve under conditions of low segregation. Greater variety in friendship options allows for more freedom in the formation of social networks. Homogeneity, on the other hand, enhances the stability of local friendships by increasing the probability of satisfying choices, with people from similar backgrounds and experiences having much in common. For people with limited resources, freedom of choice may be highly desirable under circumstances of high choice density (Cell 3). In cases where choice densities are high, a cosmopolitan community form is likely. Perhaps the best-known example of this is New York’s Greenwich Village, but most large cities have such places where an amalgam of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups share residence, usually along with a number of urban amenities. These communities exhibit moderately strong local networks, but because of the variety of social ties they are also likely to have substantial “weak ties” to other portions of the metropolitan area. This community is capable of political action, is more open to outsiders, and is likely to garner resources effectively from the larger community. It is an outward-looking community form rather than an inward-looking one. The social climate here tolerates differences. Trust in such areas is also higher. In cultures that emphasize individuality and control, this particular set of spatial conditions promotes physical and mental health (Davis 1990).

The final cell of Table 3.1 represents a situation of “detachment” not unlike Wirth’s (1938) description of urbanism. In these areas, the choice of local primary ties is arithmetically constrained, and because of the differences among neighbors, they have little in common. Such places make it difficult to find and sustain local friendships. While these areas

certainly promote individuality and freedom, the degree of personal control over friendships is minimal. Trust is eroded. Such places lack social identity as well as any political control over their future. Identity and control may be further exacerbated by the fact that they also tend to be areas with high rates of transience, further intensifying detachment (Sampson 1988).

### *Patterns of Socialization*

Because spatial circumstances affect the conditions for local interaction, they also shape socialization experiences and thus the cultural climate of residential areas. A variety of research traditions emphasize the role of space in self-development and the acquisition of roles, including: criminology (Bursik 1986; Krivo and Peterson 1996; Sampson and Wilson 1995; Taylor and Covington 1988), deviance (Crane 1991), ethnic assimilation (Lieberson 1961), and status attainment (Crane 1991; Datcher 1982).

In the criminology and deviance literatures, two health-related metaphors are used to explain role acquisition—risk exposure and contagion. Sutherland's classic theory (Sutherland and Cressey 1960) of differential association provides an idealized version of the risk exposure view. Here the likelihood of individual criminal behavior is a function of the local context and the individual's access to a diversity of roles and norms. If individuals are exposed to a predominance of deviant norms and institutions then the individual has a high likelihood of performing deviant acts. The relationship between exposure and the performance of deviant acts, however, is not linear. Crane (1991) suggests that a tipping point exists in the relationship between exposure to deviance and the likelihood of deviant behavior. In this view, a contagion effect exists when a tipping point is reached in deviance exposure, causing the levels of deviance in the area to increase at an exaggerated rate. Crane shows this effect in rates of both teenage pregnancies and high school dropouts.

These views can be set in a broader sociological context. Role theorists argue that the structure and process of human thought are affected by the social context. "Social structures differ in the extent to which they

encourage or discourage . . . the use of intellectual flexibility” (Coser 1975:252). Social contexts characterized by great role diversity stimulate the development of intellectual flexibility and self-direction. If people are exposed to complex social environments, with competing expectations (role articulation), the individual is forced to evaluate and reflect upon appropriate courses of action. This situation promotes innovation (deviation from the local norms and patterns of behavior) rather than conformity. In essence, this is one of the weaknesses of strong ties suggested by Granovetter (1973a and b). In highly segregated, dense settings, peer pressure becomes intense. The communalism of Cell 1, Table 3.1, can have contagion-like effects on the behaviors of its residents. Obviously the social linkages shaped by locale have direct bearing on the behavioral repertoire available to participants. In this sense, the same forces that constrain friendship choices should also channel likely paths of behavior via learned values and norms and available role models (Wilson 1996).

Table 3.2 presents the likely consequences of various spatial contexts for socialization outcomes in neighborhoods and communities. As such, they depict another aspect of the expected relationship between space and social climate. The phrases used to describe various outcomes reflect terms used in Robert Merton’s classic essay on deviance (1968). We assume that, particularly for the young with limited mobility (no access to regular transportation), commitment to a given behavioral pattern will be affected by (1) the diversity of roles and norms present in the neighborhood (degree of segregation); (2) the extent of role models available there (choice density); and (3) the youth’s awareness and exposure to norms and role models outside the local context. Of course, in modern

*Table 3.2* The Likely Paths of Behavior in Various Spatial Contexts

<i>Diversity of norms</i>	<i>Choice densities of possible significant others</i>	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
Low	Conformity	Ritualism
High	Innovation	Retreat

*Source:* LaGory 1982:75.

societies, role models and behavioral repertoire are readily available from a variety of extraspatial sources—print media, radio, and television—so that at least awareness and exposure to alternatives may be constant. If there is reasonable consistency of awareness, then local features should play a special role in the development of local subculture for less mobile groups (youth and elders). As youths gain access to transportation this may change somewhat, although the evidence presented earlier on social areas suggests a local effect for all age groups.

The first cell of Table 3.2 portrays a situation of high choice but limited diversity in the range of role models available. This situation, common in inner-city neighborhoods, is likely to produce high levels of conformity to the prevailing local norms. In cases where the neighborhood is riddled with illicit activity and local institutions supporting deviance, young persons learn to conform to deviant expectations. This environment promotes the presence of a pervasive local deviant subculture. Under this spatial circumstance, lifestyle orientations are relatively homogeneous, but the individual is given the illusion of some choice between role models. Here local ties are intense, but role articulation is low (i.e. limited presence of conflicting roles). Thus, both private conformity to neighborhood peer standards and limited individual autonomy are the rule.

The ritualist of Cell 2, on the other hand, may be more capable of independent action because ties are less intimate and more “sociable.” While individuals are likely to experience similarly low levels of role articulation, peer choices are very limited. This situation is likely to encourage public acceptance of local norms, but individuals may be more inclined to seek role models in the public arena (media) or in other areas. In essence, pressures to conform to the local social climate are less significant than in Cell 1.

The last two cells of Table 3.2 describe spatial conditions that afford individuals greater opportunities for autonomy. The choice of role models in the cosmopolitan community is wide ranging, in both number and variety. In this case, role articulation is more plausible and friendships are less spatially confined than in Cell 1. People have connections (weak ties) to other areas. Here the individual is free to be more innovative, and

community tolerance is likely to be higher than in conditions of conformity or ritualism. In this case, people may be encouraged to consider alternative lifestyles, and no single subculture is promoted. The retreatist stance is most likely when role articulation is probable but the choice of available role models is constrained. This condition is potentially alienating because individual freedom is encouraged (via role articulation) but the local area does not offer the array of social networks to exert this independence, a fact which may lead to social disorganization.

### Conclusion

Both interior spaces and neighborhood places have the potential to affect individuals' lives in many ways. As we demonstrate in Chapter 4, health is in part a function of human experiences and actions. To understand the experiential and behavioral factors connected to health, we should be aware of the significance of place, taking into account the role that spatial structures play in constraining or expanding the choices people have and the circumstances they are exposed to. As just seen, certain spatially structured conditions (sociocultural diversity, choice densities, levels of transience, and employment opportunities) set the social climate (friendship networks, socialization experiences, and level of violence) for various neighborhoods and thus affect residents' everyday lives. Besides this social climate, there is a physical climate shaped by forces in the global economy and the local metropolitan area which impacts everyday life. Hazards are unequally concentrated, and those with the most limited resources have the greatest exposure to hazard. In the modern high-technology, high-risk society, haves and have-nots are easily distinguished by their levels of risk exposure. This stratification of risks is deeply embedded in the urban landscape. That landscape, in turn, intensifies the risk experience. In the next chapter we show how these spatial structures may also help to shape people's health.