

Urban Crime in Western and Eastern Societies (Chicago, London and Bangkok)

Jomdet Trimek

College of Public Administration and Political Science,
Rangsit University, Thailand
E-mail: jomdet@rsu.ac.th

Abstract

With a considerable rate of crime in Bangkok, the researcher studied and analyzed criminality in Bangkok compared with that throughout Thailand and in foreign cities. The researcher conducted documentary research using data from key agencies in three countries to analyze differences in the manifestation of crime. Crime in Thailand, particularly in Bangkok, was compared with Chicago, United States, and London, United Kingdom, to uncover differences.

In comparing statistics of reported criminal cases in Bangkok from 2008 to 2010 with national statistics, the researcher found that crimes against persons in Bangkok accounted for one-sixth the number of such cases throughout the country. Moreover, crimes against property in Bangkok accounted for one-third the number of such crimes throughout Thailand. It was discovered that crime dispersion in Bangkok differs from that in Chicago and London, which experience considerable crime in their city centers and lower crime rates in the area far from the center. Crimes in Bangkok, however, are dispersed throughout the city.

Comparing crime statistics per 100,000 people in the three cities, the researcher found the lowest homicide rates in London, followed by Bangkok and Chicago, which has experienced high homicide rates for many years. The comparisons also revealed considerable defects in data collection in Thailand, resulting in a number of limitations in analyzing statistics. As crime statistics in Thailand are not collected and processed to international standards, they cannot be used for clear analysis and comparison. Moreover, such statistics might be insufficiently comparable with other countries. Moreover, the statistics might display an inaccurate picture of crime that could lead to ineffective attempts at solutions. Therefore, the quality of data collection and storage should be urgently and greatly improved and standardized.

Keywords: *Crime, Criminal, Criminology, Sociology, Western Societies, Eastern Societies, Chicago, London, Bangkok.*

1. Introduction

Continuous change exists in every society. Social change aims to raise the public's living standards in areas such as cultural improvements, effective use of natural resources, and development of knowledge and technology. Change can occur slowly or quickly, in an organized or disorganized fashion, depending on several factors including a society's education level and culture, changes in natural resources, and the arrival of new inventions. Social change is often discussed in two aspects: social progress and social deterioration.

Evolutionary theorists say that social change comprises a systematic process leading to more development and progress; a simple society becomes more complicated as it progresses continuously toward a perfect society. On the contrary, conflict theorists believe social change causes negative effects. They assume social behavior can be understood through conflict among various groups and people caused by competition to own rare and valuable resources; such conflicts lead to social deterioration and worsening social change (Pinwiset, 2007).

Human life is affected by improving and worsening social change in areas such as food, dress, human relations, and living space. Positive effects have come from new inventions that have improved and expanded developments such as roads, electricity, air travel, and computer technology. Meanwhile, social change has also had negative effects: the same rapid progress of technology and industry, for example, has exacerbated differences between urban and rural society, leading to greater social inequality, poverty, unemployment and crime, as this research shows.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 To study urban crime in Western and Eastern societies.
- 2.2 To study crime statistics of Chicago, London and Bangkok.
- 2.3 To compare criminality in Bangkok with that throughout Thailand.
- 2.4 To compare criminality in Bangkok with that in Chicago and London.

3. Methods

Documents were surveyed for crime data to determine guidelines for solving current problems as well as potential solutions for anticipated issues. The research sought answers so as to create a body of knowledge from documents and other sources, both in print and electronic media (Scott, 2006). Researchers did not visit research sites.

Documentary research was social research: collected data from texts, documents, reports and other sources with results obtained by data analysis and synthesis (Mogalakwe, 2006). Data came from public documents: material written or published by government agencies and the private sector, including acts, royal decrees, ministerial regulations, annual reports and documents containing statistics that were analyzed. These public documents were published according to the terms of the state agencies (Scott, 1990). Chicago and London (large cities in the United States and United Kingdom) were selected to illustrate urban crime in Western societies. Bangkok (Thailand's capital and largest city) was selected to illustrate urban crime in an Eastern society. Primary data comprised 2007-2010 crime statistics in Bangkok and nationally from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the Royal Thai Police; 2007-2008 data in Chicago from the Chicago Police Department Annual Report; and 2007-2008 statistics in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and New Castle from the Ministry of Interior (Home Office), United Kingdom.

4. Literature review

4.1 Burgess's concentric zone model

Burgess (1925), a criminologist, who jointly developed the Theory of Human Ecology with Robert Park (1925), used this theory to explain Chicago's growth as follows:

"The society of Chicago grew by extending from the center in circle radius and each community would also extend from the center in the same way, causing change process in that zone or community" (Burgess, 1925).

Burgess's Concentric Zone Model is shown in the following diagram.

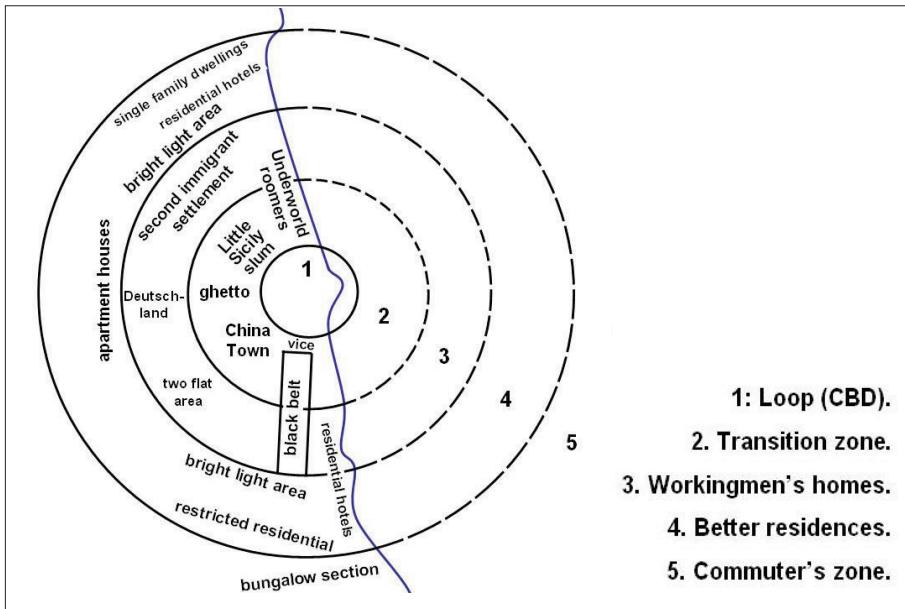


Figure 1 Burgess's Concentric Zone Model

Burgess divided Chicago into five zones classified by area use with details as follows:

Zone 1 was The Loop: the center of trade and business situated in the heart of Chicago. This zone specifically had shops and commercial space with no residential dwellings.

Zone 2 was the Zone in Transition: the city's oldest area with dwellings for Zone 1 factory workers, mainly immigrants and black workers migrating from the South who lived in dwellings divided by race or economic status. This zone was affected by the change process of the Theory of Human Ecology (Invasion, Dominance, and Succession), causing constant deterioration that resulted in Chicago's highest crime rates.

Zone 3 was the Zone of Workingmen's Homes. As workmen migrated from Zone 2, this zone became filled with accommodations at moderate prices. Most dwellers had higher incomes than Zone 2 residents.

Zone 4 was the Residential Zone: an area of people with higher economic and social status. Residences here were expensive and residents were affluent. Some residents had migrated from Zone 2 or Zone 3.

Zone 5 was the Commuters Zone, which was adjacent to the rural area. Few houses were situated in this zone because it was very far from the city (Burgess, 1925).

Burgess, sociologists and other criminologists of the University of Chicago attached special importance to areas in Zone 2. As these areas attracted migrant workers and immigrants, people with moderate or high economic status migrated to the next zone; as a result, areas in this zone would become deserted and offer inexpensive dwellings that attracted immigrants and rural migrants. With this constant flow of people, Zone 2 was changing constantly. Relationships among people in the community were weak, causing low-performing social mechanisms and customs that normally control behavior in a community. In Zone 2, change was marked by greater social disorganization that contributed to deviant behavior and criminality.

4.2 Social Disorganization Theory

Shaw and McKay (1942), sociologists at the University of Chicago, had developed the Theory of Human Ecology and Theory of Concentric Zone Model to use as guidelines for studying crime. Both theories were developed as the Social Disorganization Theory:

"Social condition of the community had changed at all times due to urbanization, weakening social control mechanism of the community and leading to considerable crimes" (Shaw & MacKay, 1942).

According to this theory, criminal behavior stemmed from the city's growth, which caused disorganization and continuous change in the community that forced it to face more crime than other communities as shown in the following chart.



Figure 2 Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Model

Social Disorganization Theory explains that growth and change in the city lead to unsettled conditions in a community as follows:

Loss or reduction of the social control mechanism: Due to greater migration into a community, dwellers do not know each other, which leads to weakness of the control mechanism within that community.

Cultural inheritance: New arrivals adapt to both bad and good behaviors of current residents, sometimes causing deviant behavior.

Cultural conflicts: New migrants bring new and different values, beliefs and cultures. These differences unavoidably cause cultural conflicts.

Poverty: Most migrants are immigrants or rural people seeking new jobs in the big city. These people typically have low economic and social status.

Burgess's Concentric Zone Model (Burgess, 1925) and the Social Disorganization Theory of Shaw and McKay (1942) were classified as the Chicago School of criminology: recognized and continuously used for explication, especially the use of said theory to explain characteristics of urban crime around the world. Yet no one in Bangkok has studied and applied the Chicago School theory. Likewise, a specific theory of characteristics of crime in Bangkok was not created to explain criminal characteristics in a city without planning.

5. Discussions

5.1 General features of Bangkok

Bangkok's land mass comprises 1,568.737 square kilometers on the Chao Phraya river basin, adjacent to Nonthaburi and PathumThani provinces to the north, Chachoengsao province to the east, SamutPrakarn province to the south, and SamutSakhon and NakhonPathom provinces to the west. Bangkok is a special administrative district according to Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act. B.E. 2528, an administrative agency with an elected governor and deputy governor responsible for administration.

Bangkok comprises 50 districts in three zones according to the concept of crime control:

The inner zone districts are Dusit, Khlong Toei, PomprapSattruPhai, PhraNakhon, Wattana, Pathumwan, Samphanthawong, Phrakanong, Bangrak, Phyathai, Bangna, Yannawa, Ratchathewi, Bangkhorlaem District, HuayKhwang, Sathorn and Din Daeng.

The middle zone districts are Bang Sue, LatPhrao, Thonburi, Jatujak, Wang Thong Lang, Khlong San, Lak Si, BuengKum, Ratburana, Don Muang, Bangkapi, ThungKhru, Bangkhen, SuanLuang, Jom Thong, Sai Mai, Praves, Saphan Soong and Khan Na Yao.

The outer zone districts are Min Buri, Bang Phlad, Phasi Charoen, NongJork, Bangkok Noi, Bang Khae, LatKra Bang, Bangkok Yai, ThawiWattana, Khlong Sam Wa, Ta Ling Chan, NongKhaem, Bang Bon and Bang KhunThian.

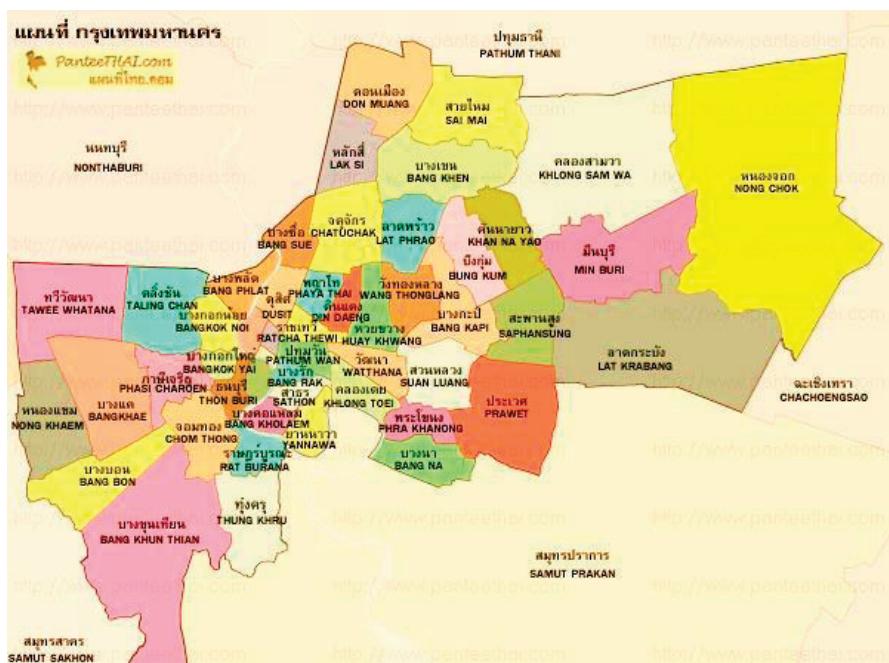


Figure 3 Bangkok map

There are 8.2 million people in Bangkok, an important capital that is the center of progress in every respect, including investment, trade, education, employment, services and international culture. Every year people from every region of Thailand continuously enter and leave Bangkok, including informal residents who come to study and work, as well as domestic and foreign short-term and long-stay tourists. (National Statistic Office, 2011).

5.2 Crime in Bangkok (metropolitan area) compared with that in other provinces

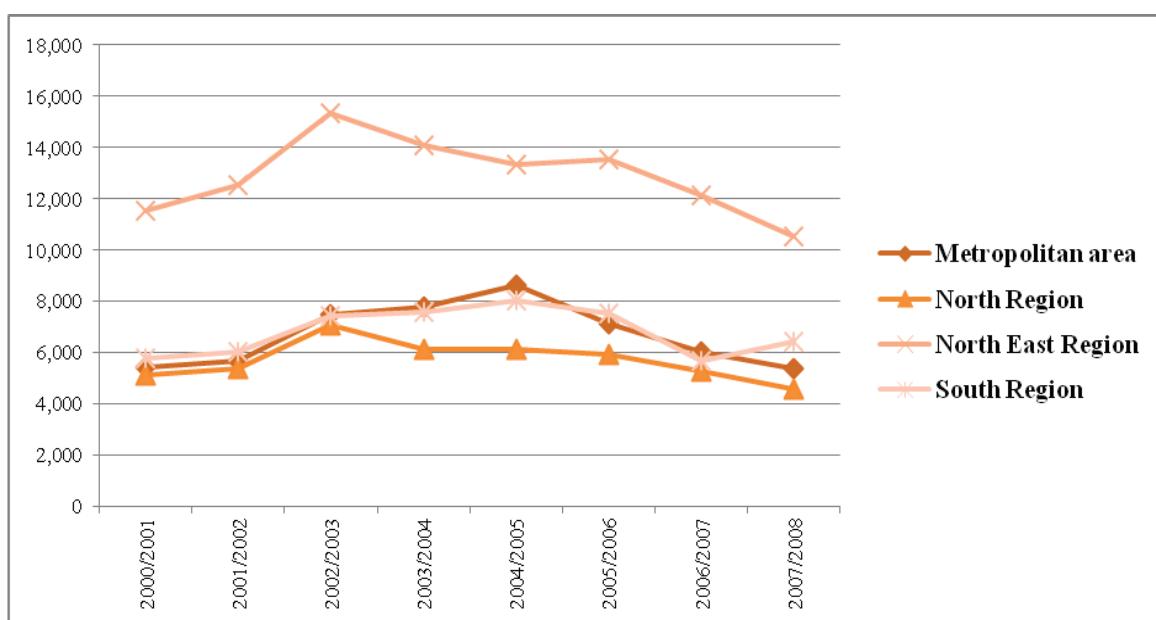


Figure 4 Crimes against persons across regions, FY 2000/2001 to FY 2007/2008

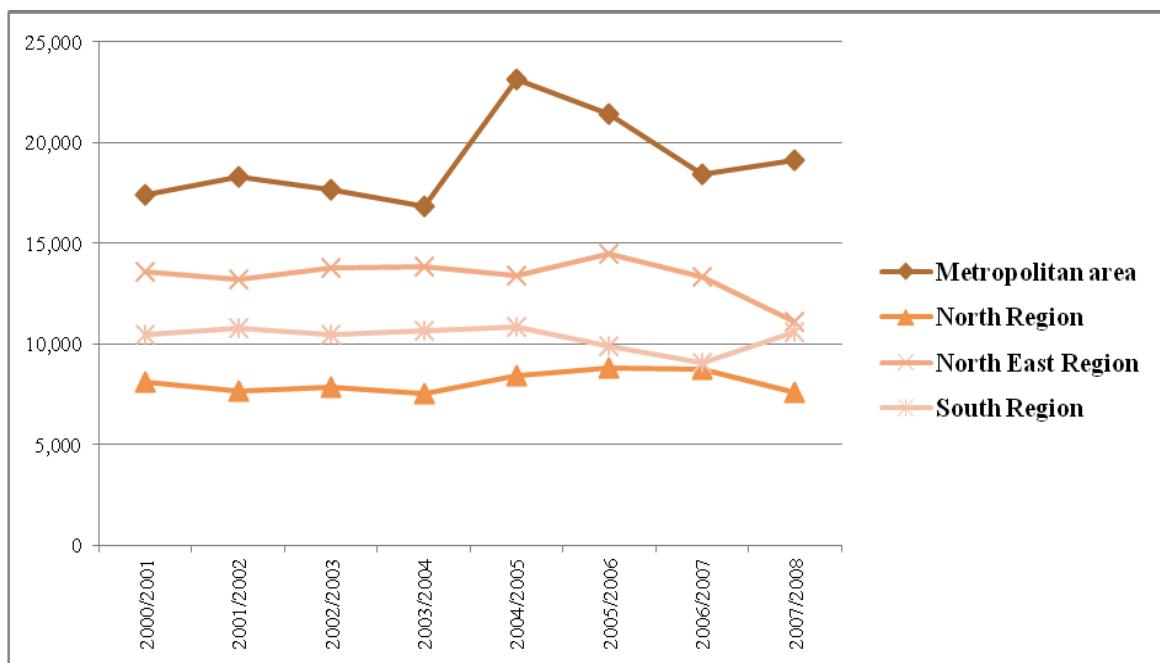


Figure 5 Overall crimes against property across regions, FY 2000/2001 to FY 2007/2008

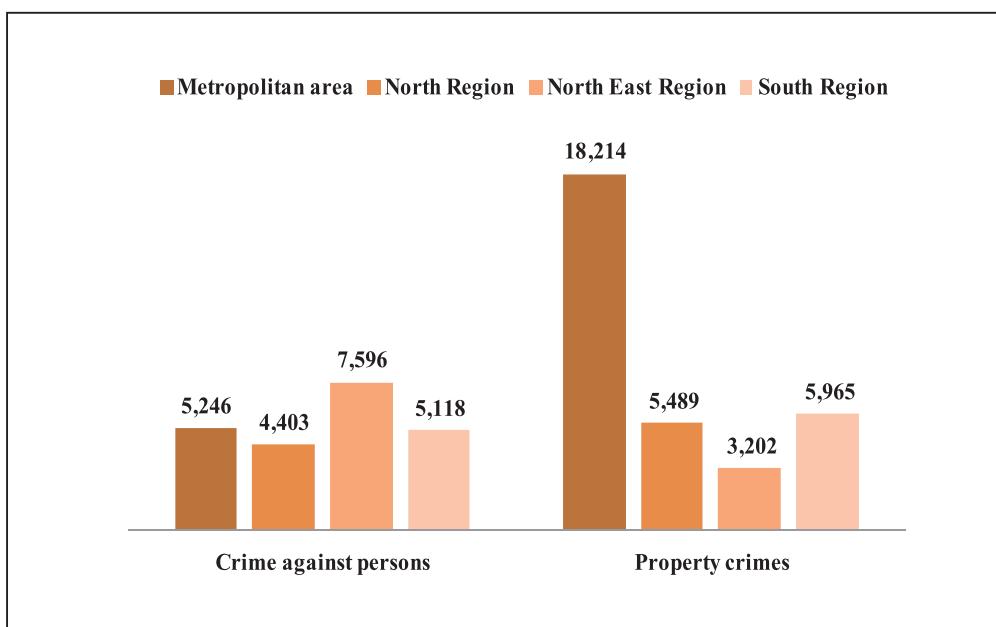


Figure 6 Statistics of reported criminal cases in Bangkok and each region (2009)

The Royal Thai Police classify crimes into five categories: 1) serious crimes; 2) crime against persons; 3) property crimes; 4) interesting crimes; 5) victimless crimes. According to the above chart of reported criminal cases in Bangkok and other regions during 2009, little difference in crimes against persons between Bangkok and other regions was seen. In contrast, crimes against property in Bangkok were three to four times higher than in other regions.

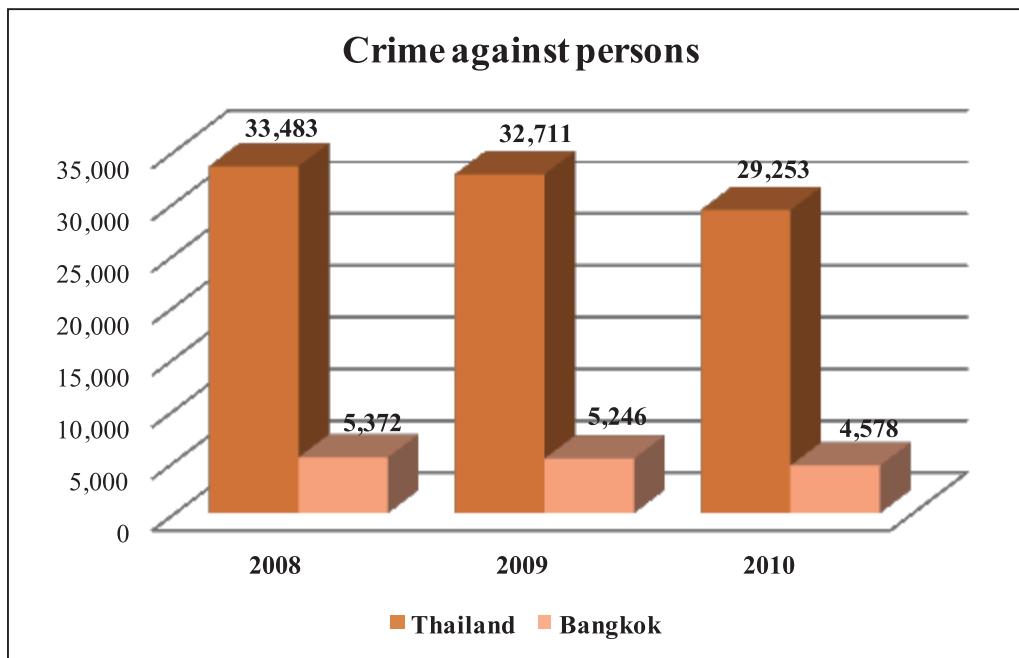


Figure 7 Statistics of reported crime against persons in Bangkok compared with reported criminal cases throughout the country (during 2008 – 2010)

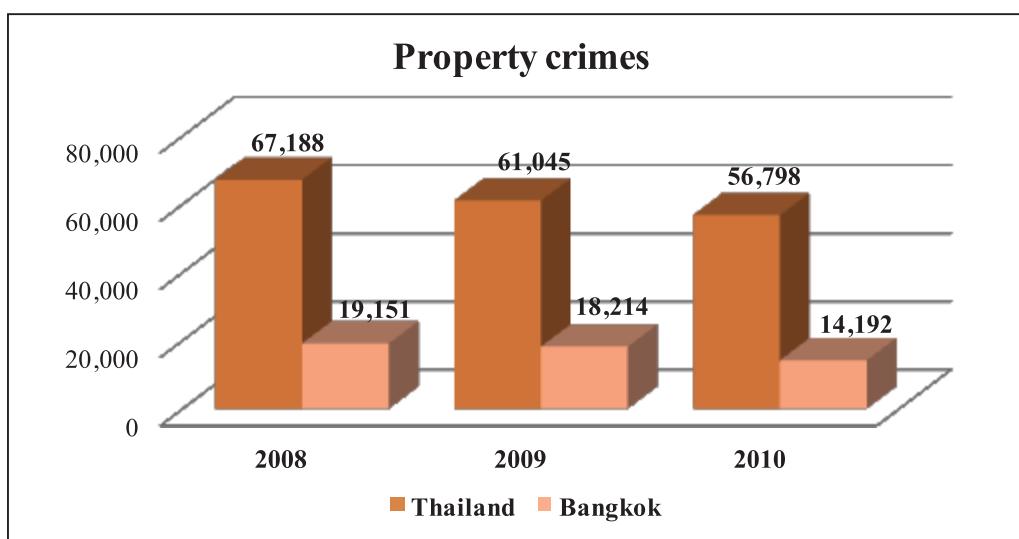


Figure 8 Statistics of reported property crimes in Bangkok compared with reported criminal cases throughout the country (during 2008 – 2010)

After comparing crime statistics throughout three years in Bangkok with statistics throughout the country, the researcher found that, as for the two categories of offence shown in the above chart, criminal cases in Bangkok accounted for one-sixth the numbers of crimes against persons and one-third the numbers of crimes against property throughout the country. Bangkok experienced more crime than in other provinces, which might stem from several factors.

5.3 Criminal causes in Bangkok

Social problems in Bangkok have increased rapidly. Most problems stem from the migration of people to work, study and operate businesses in the city despite the government offering little support to migrants. The resultant crowded communities and inadequate infrastructure have created many social problems. According to Park's Theory of Human Ecology related to the community change process called "Invasion, Dominance, and Succession" (Park, 1925) that fosters crime, Bangkok is a city of rural migrants and immigrants whose situations cause social problems. The change process in Bangkok encompasses factors from the Theory of Human Ecology that lead to many social and criminal problems.

Bangkok grew and developed with no organized direction, patterns or urban/environmental planning. As rural people continued to migrate to Bangkok, the city extended continuously to the point of fully urbanizing the suburbs. General problems in Bangkok are overcrowding, child labor, swindling, unemployment, prostitution, drug abuse, pollution and traffic jams: all leading to a deteriorated quality of life. The causes of crime can be analyzed from two perspectives:

In the macro perspective, crime in Bangkok is caused by rapid social change that made Bangkok grow in a disorganized fashion, causing an imbalance among social and physical structures and much crime.

In the micro perspective, crime in Bangkok is caused by extreme competition. As everyone struggles to survive, individuals do everything needed to enable survival in the city, resulting in criminal acts.

Moreover, the Social Disorganization Theory, which states that "Social condition of community and dwellers had changed at all times due to urbanization which weakened social control mechanism of community and led to considerable crimes" (Shaw & MacKay, 1942), can explain characteristics of Bangkok's chaos. Bangkok is a norm-less city; its social mechanism has become more fragile over the past 20 years. More dwellings such as condominiums, apartments and rental homes that house migrants have weakened the social control mechanism: people seldom know each other. Moreover, Bangkok residents do not abide by laws that traditionally have controlled social order, such as the Building Control Act, Cleanliness Act and Traffic Act. Law-breaking by the general public has diminished their conscience, resulting in further violations of the law.

5.4 Crime in Bangkok compared with characteristics of crimes in large, Western cities

5.4.1 Crime in Chicago

Table 1 Statistics of reported criminal cases in Chicago

Index Crimes, 2007 - 2008

	2007	2008	% Change
Murder	445	510	14.6%
Criminal Sexual Assault - Total	1,599	1,578	-1.3%
Attempted Criminal Sexual Assault	89	88	-1.1%
Criminal Sexual Assault	1,510	1,490	-1.3%
Robbery - Total	15,426	16,661	8.0%
Armed Robbery	8,989	10,078	12.1%
Strong-arm Robbery	6,437	6,583	2.3%
Aggravated Assault/Battery - Total	17,428	17,048	-2.2%
Gun	4,500	4,823	7.2%
Knife or cutting instrument	4,361	4,225	-3.1%
Other dangerous weapon	7,973	7,400	-7.2%
Hands, fists, feet, etc.	594	600	1.0%
Violent Crime Subtotal	34,898	35,797	2.6%

From the 1960s to the 1990s, Chicago experienced a high rate of violent crimes and the highest murder rate in the United States (David, 2003). At present, Chicago still faces major crime problems compared with other US cities. Crime in Chicago stems mainly from immigration from Russia, Italy and China, with a concentration on organized crime. According to statistics from the Chicago Police Department in 2007-2008, there was a high murder volume of 510 cases in 2008, or 17.5 murders per 100,000 residents (Chicago Police Department Annual Report, 2008): the highest rate for violent crimes in Chicago.

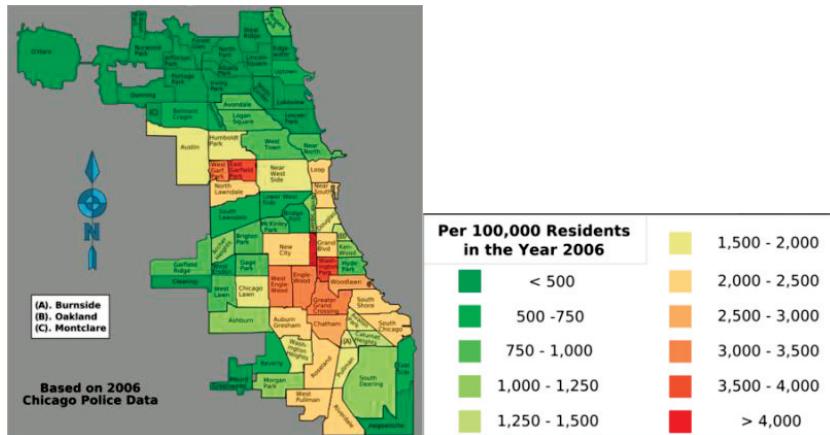


Figure 9 Statistics of violent crime in Chicago

The conclusion from Burgess's Concentric Zone Model during the 20th Century that "The society of Chicago grew by extending from the center in circle radius" can be used to explain crime that occurs in the city to this day. The chart indicates that violent crimes in Chicago in 2006 were still dispersing from the center. A high crime volume (more than 3,000 cases) was still occurring in Zone 2, which was still accommodating working migrants. These people committed crimes and gathered in groups for organized crime.

5.4.2 Crime problems in London

London, the capital of the United Kingdom, is a city under considerable security compared with other UK cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and New Castle. London experienced a very low murder rate of 1.1 cases per 100,000 people in 2007, the lowest rate among UK cities.

Table 2 Statistics of reported criminal cases in London compared with other UK cities

Police force	Main city	Homicides	Violence Against persons
Greater London	London	1.1	2320
Greater Manchester	Manchester	1.9	1930
West Midlands	Birmingham	1.6	2050
Merseyside	Liverpool	2.3	2050
Northumbria	Newcastle	2.1	1390

London has lowest rate of homicides due to two main policies:

Under Policy 1, London has the highest population monitoring via closed circuit television (CCTV) in the world.

Under Policy 2, strict enforcement of the Pistol Act of the United Kingdom greatly limits homicides.

London stepped up population monitoring after the bombing at Bishop Gate, an important financial business center, on 24 April 1993, leading to greater use of CCTV and stricter security measures. Later, government implementation of the "ring of steel," a series of surveillance and security measures surrounding the City of London financial district that was eventually widened, turned London into the most monitored city in the world. In 1996, the government installed 15,000 CCTVs in public places (Fussey, 2007; Davis 2008). Found more than 500,000 CCTV installations.

Moreover, a policy that reduced homicides in London and the UK was implementation of the Pistol Act. Implementation guidelines in accordance with UK pistol control policy began in 1903. The country had passed laws to license handguns for suitable reasons, with stricter controls implemented during

World War II (1939-1945). Only police officers in some agencies carried firearms during operations such as security for the prime minister and the British royal family. Police patrol officers did not carry guns. During 1997, the Pistol Act stipulated that only authorities could possess pistols. In 2004, the Ministry of Interior adopted Tasers and baton guns, while only police officers trained for pistol use and were strictly selected could carry firearms. In 2006, the United Kingdom issued the Imitation Firearms Control Law for baton guns, resulting in the lowest rate of violent crimes involving pistols compared with every other country. Most criminals use knives, which are relatively easy to confront and control.

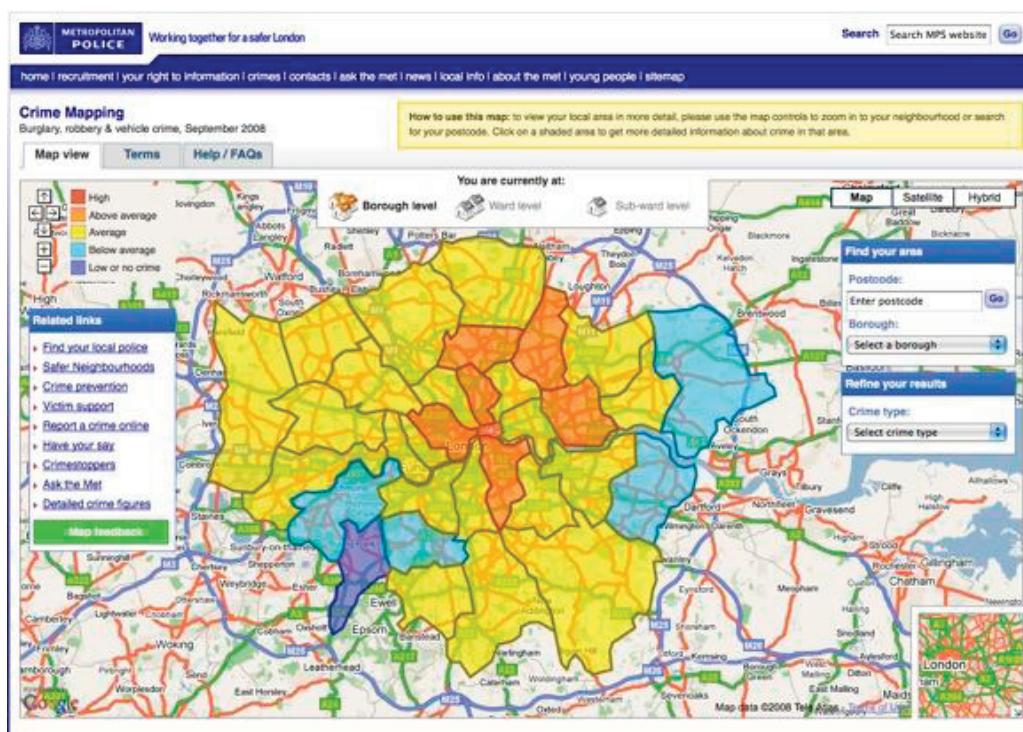


Figure 10 Crime Mapping of London Metropolitan Police 2008

Characteristics of crimes in London in 2008 from the Crime Mapping of London Metropolitan Police showed that crimes were similar to those in Chicago which dispersed from the center. The area of excessive crime was in the second circle of the city: the zone adjacent to the city center and included dwellings of migrant workers, according to Burgess's Concentric Zone Model (Burgess, 1925). The next zone, comprised of dwellings of people with higher status, experienced fewer decreasing crimes.

5.4.3 Differences among crimes in London, Chicago and Bangkok

After comparing characteristics of crimes in Bangkok with those in Chicago and London, the researcher found that crimes in Bangkok, Chicago and London differed because Bangkok's development did not extend from the center as in other cities. Though its role is to solve crime in Thailand, the Metropolitan Police Bureau, Royal Thai Police has never made criminal maps of Bangkok; hence, characteristics of crimes in Bangkok cannot be clearly analyzed. However, after using Burgess's Concentric Zone Model (Burgess, 1925) to explain crimes in Bangkok, the researcher found that residential patterns in Bangkok are different from those in Western cities. People with high status desire dwellings in the center of Bangkok, while people with lower status prefer living in outside areas where costs are lower than in the city's center.

Moreover, dispersion of progress in Bangkok was unlike that in cities around the world. Department stores were built in each city corner. People illegally migrated to build dwellings and live in every district of Bangkok. According to Burgess's Concentric Zone Model, a district in Bangkok most similar to Zone 2 was

Khlong Toei, with the highest rate of violent crime, crimes against property and drug-related crime. This resulted from district land being illegally seized and occupied by poorer people, causing the "Invasion, Dominance, and Succession" change process in Park's Theory of Human Ecology (1925).

Table 3 Comparative statistics of crimes per 100,000 people: Chicago, London and Bangkok 2007

Populations: 2.9 million people in Chicago, 7.4 million people in London and 8.2 million people in Bangkok

Type of crime	Chicago	London	Bangkok
Homicides	15.32	1.1	4.86
Violence against persons	600.91	2,320	90.4
Sexual offences	55.13	1,200	9.09
Robbery	531.93	4,900	13.41
Burglary, Larceny	4,236.40	24,000	456.96

By comparing crime statistics per 100,000 people in Chicago, London and Bangkok, the researcher found that London had the lowest homicide rate of 1.1 cases per 100,000 people, followed by Bangkok with 4.86 cases and Chicago with an extremely high rate of 15.32 cases. London had the highest rate of violence, followed by Chicago and Bangkok, which had a very low rate of violence: 90.4 cases per 100,000 people. However, many violence cases are unrecorded, causing an inaccurate collection of statistical data and erroneous analysis and policy proposals.

As for sexual offences, Thailand's recording of statistics for this type of crime is problematic. According to the collection of statistics of five groups of criminal cases by the Royal Thai Police, only rape cases are recorded, not other sexual offences, causing untrustworthy data that indicates differing statistics for sexual offence in Bangkok and other cities.

Statistics for robbery and mugging indicate the limitations of Thai law and comparing statistics of foreign countries. According to Thai Law, Criminal Code Section 240 defines robbery as an action of more than three people, while mugging is an acquisition of property using violence. Foreign countries do not separate these two crimes, causing difficulty in comparing statistics in Thailand with those in foreign countries. Thus the author had to combine the number of crimes from the two categories (the rate of robbery committed by 1-2 offenders by 9.90 and the rate of robbery committed by 3 offenders or more by 3.51) before comparing with other cities.

Moreover, people concerned do not always receive or record reports of crimes because the policy of the Royal Thai Police defines robbery or mugging as serious crimes, resulting in distorted data that indicate different statistics of robbery and mugging in Bangkok and other cities.

As for burglary, because the Royal Thai Police does not separate indoor burglary from outdoor theft, problem-solving policies cannot be determined. Statistics shown in tables present untrustworthy data indicating that a low rate of crimes against property in Bangkok compared with other cities.

6. Conclusion

Crime in Bangkok stems from a deteriorated society and weakened social bonds due to migration from other provinces: a rapid increase in number of rental housing units, single homes and large condominiums support overpopulation. Clearly seen in Bangkok is the lack of close relationships among neighbors. After analyzing problems with the Theories of Sociological Criminology, the researcher found that Bangkok is partially associated with the theory's conclusions.

The association holds in that Bangkok continuously attracts rural migrants and immigrants, leading to social and crime problems. Bangkok's social mechanism has been weakened due to this fast social change; urban society creates social and crime problems. However, after comparing Burgess's Concentric Zone Model that can be used to explain characteristics of crime in other cities such as Chicago and London, the researcher found that the theory could not be used to explain characteristics of crimes in Bangkok because the city did not experience growth extending from the center as experienced in other cities. Residential values of people with high and low social status differ from those of Westerners. After

comparing crime statistics for Chicago, London and Bangkok, the researcher found numerous defects in statistical-gathering in Thailand: neither clear analysis and comparison nor correct determination of crime-solving policies is possible.

Thus, solving crime in Bangkok cannot start with determining effective policies because statistics collection, cause analysis and consideration of crime problems have not been evaluated to international standards. Finally, police officers do not disclose true statistics of crimes so as to maintain a good image of the Royal Thai Police force, negatively affecting management of crime in Bangkok and Thailand and forgoing improvement unless and until their values and implementation methods change.

7. References

- Burgess, E.W. (1925). *The growth of the city: An introduction to a research project*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Chicago Police Department. (2008). Chicago Police Department Annual Report. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/News/Statistical%20Reports/Annual%20Reports/08AR%5B1%5D.pdf>
- David, H. (2003). Chicago falls out of 1st in murders. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://qrc.depaul.edu/djabon/Articles/ChicagoCrime20030101.htm>
- Home Office. (2008). Homicide, firearms offences and intimate violence 2007/08. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/09hosb.0209pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. (2007). สถานการณ์ความมั่นคงของมุยงประเทศไทย .Retrieved May 2, 2013, from http://www.m-society.go.th/document/edoc/edoc_2618pdf
- Mogalakwe, M. (2006). The use of documentary research methods in social research. *African sociological review*.10 (1), 221-230.
- National Statistical Office. (2011). The 2010 population and housing census. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://popcensus.nso.go.th/file/popcensus-08-08-55-T.pdf>
- Panteethai. (n.d.). ແພນທີ່ກູງທາພມທານຄຣ. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from <http://www.panteethai.com/province.php?>
- Park, R.E. (1925). *Human Communities*. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press.
- Pinveset, M. (2007). ຂຶ້ວຕະລະວັດນະຮຽນໄກຍ. Bangkok: Aimphan Press.
- Royal Thai Police. (2013). ຄົມຕົກລົງຈາກ15 ກຸ່ມ. Retrieved May 2, 2013, from http://statistic.police.go.th/dn_main.htm
- Scott, J. (2006). *Documentary research*. London: Sage.
- Scott, J. (1990). *A matter of record: Documentary sources in social research*. Polity press:
- Shaw, C.R., & Macky, H.D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.