

Collective Action, Structural Disadvantage and Crime

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This paper compares “top down” to “bottom up” community reactions to neighborhood crime and disorder. Bottom-up efforts to defend communities are largely naturally-occurring, for they arise out of shared values and perspectives on problems, dense social relationships, civic engagement and the organizing abilities of community residents. The bottom-up neighborhood self-regulatory mechanisms examined here include informal social control, collective efficacy, community mobilization and electoral alliance-building. This research contrasts bottom-up collective action with a top-down, state-sponsored alternative, Chicago’s beat meetings. It evaluates them in terms of their relationship to concentrated disadvantage. A great deal of research on public and civil society activities that rely on voluntary participation has found that the opportunities for involvement they create typically advantage better-off neighborhoods that need them the least and already get along with the police. The question here is, do top-down or bottom-up projects hold out more hope for assisting poorer areas?

Introduction

This paper compares “top down” to “bottom up” community responses to neighborhood crime and disorder. At least 70 years of criminological research – certainly since Shaw & McKay (1942) raised the unit of analysis from individual delinquents to the area level – has emphasized the role played by community factors in both causing crime and in controlling it. Hunter (1985) usefully classifies various forms of community self-regulation as “private, parochial and public” in character. In the “private” sphere – and beyond the scope of this study – lies the strength of family values, the ability of parents to socialize and control their children, and obligations of kinship. Directly relevant here are the interpersonal networks, connections between local institutions, and activities of neighborhood groups and more formal voluntary associations that make up the “parochial” order. These are resources that can be applied to sanction the behaviors of group members. When it comes to crime prevention, research has labeled this sanctioning activity “collective efficacy” and “informal social control.” When communities make claims upon the state for resources and protection they enter the Hunter’s “public” sphere. These efforts may generate useful contributions to neighborhood safety, but residents must compete with strangers representing other communities for attention and assistance. This is the domain of protest and politics. The most stable communities

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are strong on all three dimensions, but successfully nurturing even one or two of these routes to self-regulation could make important contributions to community safety.

These forms of self-regulation can be thought of as relatively “naturally occurring” social processes; here I will refer to them as “bottom-up” community defense mechanisms. They arise out of shared values and perspectives on problems, dense social relationships, and the organizing abilities of individual community residents. Their strength will vary from place to place, and understanding that variety is a frequent topic for research. Studies indicate that communities differ tremendously in their ability to confront problems on their own. In some areas residents feel they can count on each other to watch out for trouble and even to intervene, if necessary, on their behalf; elsewhere people feel they are on their own, possibly not even trusting their neighbors, or their neighbor’s children. Some communities are heavily endowed with active voluntary organizations organized around blocks or small subareas; others support only a few struggling groups. Some neighborhoods have a proven capacity to extract resources from outside that will help them deal with local problems; in other places, residents do not have many downtown connections and are largely disregarded by public agencies and powerful private institutions.

This study evaluates a range of bottom-up self-policing mechanisms in terms of their potential *distributive* effects, e.g., by their relationship to concentrated disadvantage. The question is, do they aide in the defense of already better-off neighborhoods, or do they hold out the promise of assisting poorer areas? This is an important question because there is reason to expect the former. There has been a great deal of research on community activities and government programs that rely on voluntary participation by the public, some of which will be reviewed below. These studies typically find that the opportunities for involvement they create typically advantage better-off neighborhoods that may need them the least.

In contrast, this study compares the distribution of bottom-up responses to crime and disorder to an alternative, state sponsored mechanism promoting community safety. “Beat meetings” were organized by the police in Chicago in order to create a venue for involving the public in community policing. Chicago’s new, deliberately constructed effort to mobilize collective action against crime and disorder centers on meetings that until recently were held in most of the city’s police beats, almost every month². The meetings were held as part of the Chicago’s neighborhood-oriented policing program, which began experimentally in 1993 and expanded to become a citywide program in 1995. The program was designed to focus police and city services on the city’s neighborhoods, and to involve the public in identifying, prioritizing and responding to local problems (Skogan, 2006). The question is, does this state-sponsored effort to mobilize residents around crime prevention – which here I refer to as a “top-down” effort – also threaten to advantage better-off neighborhoods that already get along with the police and may not need extra help, or does it promise to promote public safety in places that need it more?

² Beat meetings continue to be held. By the end of 2010 the fiscal crisis facing Chicago had led to a cut-back in the frequency of the meetings and a 60-minute cap on their length. Beat meetings were always held quarterly rather than monthly in areas of the city that are largely non-residential in character, including business districts.

The next section of this article describes the range of collective response to crime and disorder that are considered here, and reviews the literature about them. Then there is a description of the data and measures that are employed in the current study. This is followed by a statistical and graphical analysis of the relationship between collective action and concentrated poverty, one that contrasts bottom-up to top-down self-regulation. This comparison reveals that bottom-up and top-down collective actions are very differently distributed and contribute to the safety of entirely different parts of the city. There is also a statistical analysis of patterns of bottom-up and top-down involvement. This examines the link between measures of collective involvement and a number of indicators of local conditions. This comparison further highlights how bottom-up and top-down involvement actually serves different communities. A concluding section discusses the findings in light of the policy issues they raise.

1. Bottom-up Collective Action and Disadvantage

Many decades of criminological research has repeatedly documented the important role played by *informal social control* in controlling crime. It is exercised by residents who are willing to step forward and challenge those who violate local norms. Shaw & McKay (1942) in particular stressed resident's ability to supervise and control teenage peer groups, the source of most gangs. In neighborhoods characterized by intense familiarity, dense social ties, and high participation in voluntary associations, residents will find it easier to recognize strangers, categorize people they know, and perform the "guardianship" functions that check serious crime. By contrast, high crime communities suffer from disrupted friendship, kinship and acquaintanceship networks and feature a limited range of formal and associational options for responding to residents' concerns. This limits their capacity for informal intervention. Informal "pro-social" interventions and effective sanctioning behaviors are much weaker in these areas (Sampson and Groves, 1989).

Informal social control is a key component of *collective efficacy*, a concept developed in a seminal article by Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls (1997). Since its publication, collective efficacy has become one of the better-known concepts in contemporary social science³. It has two components. One is the extent of local social cohesion, which they describe as trust and solidarity among neighbors. The obverse of social cohesion is "a context in which the rules are unclear and people mistrust or fear one another" (p. 919). The other is the action component of collective efficacy, "the willingness of local residents to intervene" (p. 919). Combined, "it is the linkage of mutual trust and the willingness to intervene for the common good that defines collective efficacy" (p. 919).

Collective efficacy therefore overlaps the concept of informal social control. Both envision community residents autonomously engaging to differing degrees in individual initiatives aimed at securing community safety. However, collective efficacy adds a trust and solidarity component to efforts to engage in informal social control, so the two will be evaluated separately here. In this study, collective efficacy will also be measured

³ On 13 February 2012, a general Google search combining the terms "collective efficacy" and "Sampson" generated links to 43,500 web pages; Google Scholar generated links to 6,300 web pages. At the same time the Web of Science included 1,614 articles listing the subject "collective efficacy" and 2,186 specific citations of the 1997 *Science* article.

independently of its closely allied concepts, using the data originally collected by Sampson, *et al.* (1997).

Many decades of research on informal social control and just over one on collective efficacy have documented their effectiveness in preventing crime (for a recent summary see Sampson, 2012). Sampson, *et al.* (1997) report that a two standard deviation change in collective efficacy (which, it should be noted, is a very large change) was associated with a 40 percent decline in homicide. However, the reach of self-regulation may be limited. The frequency of bottom-up efforts at community self-policing varies greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood, and there is a strong “establishment bias” in activities that rely on voluntary participation. Higher status Americans are more likely to be involved in community and service-oriented activities. Education is the most consistent predictor of volunteering and belonging to organizations, while home owners perceive they have higher stakes in neighborhood conditions and they are more apt to engage with neighborhood events and turn out for civic activities (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). Residents of high-poverty areas are less likely to report involvement in civic and voluntary associations, social and cultural clubs (Marschall, 2004; Wilson, 2000; Cohen & Dawson, 1993). Further, there is evidence that when income inequality increases, lower-class group involvement tends to diminish, and that group participation in the United States is becoming even more class stratified (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). We should expect to find that involvement in collective action will be more common among better educated and informed people, better-off home owners, and racial majorities.

In the public arena, politics provides an important bottom-up way to get things done. Robert Putnam’s (1995) concept “vertical social capital” reflects the extent to which communities are linked to citywide or even broader institutions that can deliver jobs, goods, services and investment capital that troubled places need in order to tackle local problems. One mechanism for attracting attention and assistance in the public sphere is through electoral participation. Like many American cities located in the eastern and middle-western states, Chicago is lead by a popularly elected mayor with extensive formal and informal political control over taxing, spending and the delivery of a broad range of city services. His control of the city depends in part on using the resources of city government to reward his supporters and punish his opponents⁴³. Among the rewards under his control is the delivery of city services, ranging from quickly towing away abandoned cars to cleaning up graffiti when it appears on public and private buildings. These services could be one response to the physical decay and social disorder problems that Chicagoans rank among their neighborhoods’ most important problems. In a study of the determinants of whom gets what services from city government, Skogan (2003) found that the delivery of selected services was not only problem driven. In addition, who got what was significantly influenced by the political support for the mayor delivered by each community at election time.

However, in the United States, election turnout and many other forms of conventional political participation is historically low in poor and minority districts. This includes both voting and activities such as talking about politics with family and friends, contacting public officials, attending community meetings and donating money to candidates or political groups (Cohen & Dawson, 1993). Social networks in high-poverty areas tend

⁴ For an account of contemporary Chicago politics see Bennett, 2010.

to consist primarily of low engagement people, and the resulting “anti-participation” environment further discourages involvement. In contrast, political participation rises with education and affluence, both at the individual level and in response to neighborhood context. Higher status Americans report greater levels of political efficacy, trust in institutions, interest in politics, and political knowledge (Marschall, 2004). In addition, participation in voluntary associations tends to activate interest and involvement in politics, and increases the likelihood of voting (Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). The two forms of collective action thus reinforce each other. In short, while there is reason to suspect that, when it comes to community safety, neighborhoods that are politically well connected will be able to command more resources, these are unlikely to be the poorest, highest-crime areas that need it the most.

Community mobilization is another strategy that communities can hope will influence the distribution of resources from the wider community and the public sector. This is important because in poorer areas the most pressing problems may be beyond the capacity of residents alone to address. Instead they must compete for attention and assistance in the broader municipal arena. Neighborhoods that can mobilize themselves extra-politically can tap into Putnam’s vertical social capital, through their contacts with public officials and the nonprofit sector, their ability to engage the attention of the media, and their willingness to threaten or deploy protest as a strategy for extracting resources from the wider community.

Ironically, there was a turn in patterns of social protest in the United States beginning in the 1980s, one which reoriented the social class basis of extra-political mobilization around community, social and policy issues. When protest politics is examined systematically, the disruptive contestation by the urban poor that characterized the 1960s and 1970s has been replaced by routinized, peaceful and nondisruptive demonstrating that is more suburban and middle-class in origin, purpose and style. In their study of 30 years of protest politics in Chicago, McAdam, Sampson, Weffer & MacIndoe (2005) found that measures of protest activity steadily broke their link with racial and economic disadvantage over time. By 2000, all of their measures of disadvantage were negatively correlated with the geography of protest. Higher income areas are now more likely to initiate and sustain protest activity. Along with this, its character changed, and “... by 2000, disruption had, for all intents and purposes, cease to be a feature of public protest” (McAdam *et al.*, 2005, p. 16).

2. Top-Down Collective Action

Beat meetings, by contrast, provide a new way of getting things done in Chicago, and perhaps in other urban communities. They are a consciously developed, “top-down” attempt by police and municipal leaders to create a venue for consultation and collaboration between officers and residents that will secure community safety. Beat meetings were designed to be forums for exchanging information, identifying neighborhood problems, prioritizing them, and directing both police and resident efforts to solve them. The police dispatching system was reorganized so that officers who attended the meetings were the same ones who answered emergency calls in the area. Police serving in specialized units, such as gang teams or detectives, are often present. Local crime maps, lists of the most frequent crimes on the beat, and other informational materials are distributed at the meetings, following a printed agenda. There is always

a discussion of what has happened with regard to issues raised at the last meeting, and this provides a bit of community oversight of police activity. The new business segment of the meetings focuses on identifying new issues and debating whether they are general problems or just the concern of one resident. Beat meetings are also a very convenient place to distribute announcements about upcoming community events, circulate petitions, and call for volunteers to participate in action projects. Especially during the 1990s, beat meetings played an important role in focusing other city services on local priority problems as well. Through special service request forms, beat officers were able quickly to mobilize street cleaners, repair trucks, and other city resources, and they could easily get abandoned cars towed away, empty buildings boarded up, graffiti painted over, and vacant lots cleared of trash.

When they began there were 279 police beats in the city, and the average beat met 10 times per year. Beginning in 1995, about 65,000 to 70,000 participants attended about 3,000 meetings each year. They met with an average of five to seven police officers, most of whom regularly patrolled in the area. By the end of 2009, residents had turned out for meetings on just under one million occasions. Of course, the percentage of residents who attend is smaller than this suggests; residents can, and do, attend these monthly local meetings more than once. The meetings are widely known. In a citywide survey conducted in 2003, 62 percent of adults were aware that police-community meetings were being held regularly in their neighborhood. However, as a reminder that participation is not automatic, just 16 percent of adult Chicagoans said they had attended at least one beat meeting in the previous year (Skogan, 2006).

Much less is known about public involvement in top-down state-directed crime prevention efforts, but a reasonable working hypothesis would be that police-centered programs also threaten to advantage better-off neighborhoods. In particular, these are places where residents already get along well with the police. Tyler & Fagan (2008) find that trust in the police is an important determinant of being ready to cooperate with them. However, many decades of research documents that trust in the police can be in short supply in poor neighborhoods. Residents there typically perceive that they receive poorer service (Barlow and Barlow 2000), and that they are more subject to police racism, abuse of power and excessive use of force (Weitzer, Tuch & Skogan, 2008). Sampson & Jenglum-Bartusch (1998, p. 801) concluded that “those most exposed to the numbing reality of pervasive segregation and economic subjugation” are the most cynical about the legal system and dissatisfied with the police. This view they concluded, constitutes “the cognitive landscape” of the poor.

3. Data and Measures

In this study, bottom-up “natural” community defense mechanisms are captured using a variety of survey and archival records. The extent of informal social control and community mobilization are assessed using surveys conducted in Chicago to evaluate its community policing initiative. Neighborhood collective efficacy, which is a closely allied process that overlaps informal social control and community mobilization conceptually and in terms of survey measures, is measured using the data originally collected by Sampson, *et al.* (1997). The establishment political connections of each Chicago area were gauged using official voting records. All of these forms of involvement were

organized around the same set of 279 police beats, for the period circa 2000. Beat meeting attendance is measured using official records.

3.1. Beat Meeting Attendance

The unit of analysis for this research is the police beat because this was the collection unit for meeting attendance data. The police department's counts of meeting attendees were used to calculate the beat meeting attendance rate in each of the city's 279 beats. An officer who is present completes a brief paper form describing what takes place at each meeting. The form records the time, place and length of the meeting, a brief summary of the issues that were discussed, a list of police officers who attended, and the total number of residents attending. These are reviewed and signed by the sergeant supervising beat meetings, who usually attends as well. At the end of the month the forms are assembled at each of the city's 25 police districts and forwarded to headquarters; in turn, they sent photocopies of the forms to our evaluation team, which coded and keyed each meeting report. On several occasions the evaluation team was able to compare the attendance numbers recorded on the forms with direct observations of a large, random sample of the same meetings. These comparisons confirmed that the beat meeting paperwork was quite accurate (Skogan, 2006).

The data presented here are based on reports for 8,857 meetings. Over the 2001-2003 period, the average beat met 10.6 times per year. The average meeting involved 21.4 residents, a figure that ranged from an average of 5 to 77 persons per month. Meeting attendance is very seasonal, higher in the summer and much lower in the winter, so these data are averaged across the entire 36-month period. The average monthly attendance rate for each beat was calculated using its estimated adult (age 18 and older) population for the period. The resulting rate per 10,000 adult residents was logged for statistical analysis, because it is significantly skewed. The natural logged values were normally distributed.

3.2. Informal Social Control

The capacity of communities to intervene in events that threaten to disrupt the local order was measured using data aggregated from two large surveys of Chicago. The surveys were conducted to help evaluate the city's community policing program. They were designed to be large enough to separately represent the city's large White, African American and Hispanic populations. The merged 2001 and 2003 surveys (none was conducted in 2002) included a total of 5,626 respondents. The police beat in which each respondent lived was determined by questions included in the surveys. A limited amount of multiple imputation was used to estimate values for some small-population beats that were not represented by at least ten respondents in the surveys.

The willingness of residents to step forward and challenge those who violate local norms is one indicator of the strength of a community's informal social control. In our Chicago surveys, informal social control was measured by survey responses to three questions about the likelihood that neighbors would intervene to stop untoward events from occurring. The scenarios included children spray-painting graffiti on a local building, a fight in which someone was being beaten or threatened, and a teenager harassing an elderly person. In each case, respondents were asked if it was very likely, likely,

unlikely, or very unlikely that their neighbors would take action. Intervening to halt the harassment of a senior citizen was thought to be the most likely action taken – 84 percent thought their neighbors were likely to do so. Neighbors intervening to break up a fight seemed least likely to happen; only 29 percent thought this was very likely, and less than 60 percent thought it was likely to any extent. The average correlation between responses to these three survey questions was $+.34$; the alpha reliability for this measure was $.60$. An aggregate informal social control measure was created for each beat after averaging individual responses to the three questions, with a high score signaling higher levels of informal social control.

3.3. Community Mobilization

The evaluation surveys were also used to characterize the potential for community mobilization in each policing area. The focus was non-electoral activism aimed at influencing city officials and political leaders and gaining the attention of the media. Effective community mobilization has a long history in Chicago. In the early 1990s, complaints by community organizations and huge turnouts at community meetings protesting a plan to save money by closing seven neighborhood police stations led the city to back down on its proposal, despite a difficult financial environment (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997).

To assess the potential for this kind of mobilization on a beat-by-beat basis, each area was scored based on responses to questions about whether neighborhood residents would protest a closing of the local police station because of budget cuts, and if they would organize to try to keep any new public housing being built in their community. Respondents were asked “how likely” their neighbors were to get involved in such efforts, on a four-point scale. Acting to keep their local police station from closing was seen as most likely; 83 percent of respondents thought their neighbors were somewhat or very likely to do so. In total, 67 percent thought it was likely to some extent that their neighbors would turn out to halt the construction of new public housing, but only 38 percent thought this was “very” likely. An aggregated community mobilization index was created for each beat by averaging responses to these two questions, with a high score indicating higher levels of community mobilization.

3.4. Collective Efficacy

The analysis of collective efficacy presented here is based on the original Sampson, *et al.* (1997) data and procedures. Their survey was quite large, enabling us to characterize many small areas of Chicago, and it included all ten component measures. Using their data, we created a collective efficacy measure for each police beat, following their description of how it was constructed at pages 919-920. The scores were composed of responses to ten survey questions that combined the concept of informal social control with that of solidarity among residents. Five measures assessed respondents' views of community cohesiveness. They were asked to rate their agreement (on a 1-5 scale) with statements like “this is a close-knit neighborhood,” “people are willing to help neighbors,” “people don't get along” (reversed), “people in the neighborhood can be trusted,” and “people in the neighborhood do not share the same values” (reversed). The strength of community informal control was measured by ratings of the likelihood that residents would do something to “stop kids skipping school” and “kids defacing

buildings." There were similar questions regarding whether neighbors would "scold a child not showing respect," "break up a fight in front of their house," and "organize to keep a local fire station from closing." This analysis equally weights each of the ten items in a single summary scale. Based on the subset of complete data the scale formed by the ten items had an alpha reliability of .85 and an average inter-item correlation of .361. However, imputed data were used in this analysis, to account for a large amount of missing data⁵⁴.

3.5. Political Allegiance

Allegiance to the political establishment is another bottom-up strategy for building community capacity, in this case by securing resources from the outside. For this study, election data were aggregated to the beat level from the city's thousands of small election precincts in which voting takes place. The data are for the 1999 mayoral election. Beat-level support for the incumbent mayor, who was running for reelection, ranged from 19 to 95 percent. On average the mayor received 63 percent of the vote, and he was successful. However, the data were strongly bimodal. Predominately African American beats produced relatively few votes for the winning candidate, while largely White and Latino areas hovered between 75 and 95 percent in his favor.

3.6. Concentrated Poverty

Concentrated poverty is measured by a factor score based on 2000 Census measures that were mapped onto police beats. The indicators included in the factor analysis closely parallel those used by Sampson, *et al.* (1997), but for the year 2000 rather than 1990. The rotated factor loadings reflect co-variation among the percentages of households living in poverty and receiving public financial assistance, the percent of family households headed by females, and the density of children. Unlike the Sampson, *et al.* project, race is not included in our measure of concentrated poverty. Chicago is home to three large groups – Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics – and it usually more revealing to incorporate measures of the racial composition of communities as separate variables in an analysis.

4. Findings: Collective Action and Concentrated Poverty

Figure 1 plots the relationship between concentrated poverty in each of the city's police beats and the distribution of each form of collective action. The various involvement rates – the dependent variables – are arrayed along the y-axis. They are all presented as

⁵ While there are nominally 8,782 cases in the survey data file, there is a great deal of missing data at the item level. This is due in part (for about 7 percent of the total sample) to the use of an abbreviated questionnaire in the refusal conversion process. Other missing data are scattered, but accumulate for multi-item scales. A collective efficacy measure created by summing valid responses to its ten component items would have only 5,117 cases, a loss of 42 percent of the original respondent set and coverage of some beats. To counter this we used multiple imputation at the item level to produce a complete dataset with 8,782 cases and created the beat level collective efficacy measure by aggregating the imputed values for every beat with survey data (274, of 279). A comparison of patterns in data aggregated from the imputed and (smaller) observed data sets reveals a very close agreement between the two. The distribution of collective efficacy presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 was also very similar for both sets of data. Other comparisons based only on beats with at least ten actual survey respondents in the Sampson data came to the same conclusions. For more information about the data and how to access it for re-analysis, see ICPSR Study 2766 (1999).

standardized z-scores, to give them a comparable scale. Each regression line in Figure 1 reflects the covariation of hundreds of data points, so the underlying data are omitted from the illustration and only the general forms of the relationships are displayed. The regression lines describing the data are Loess smoothed, so they can take mildly curvilinear forms where that is appropriate for the data, rather than being forced into straight lines.

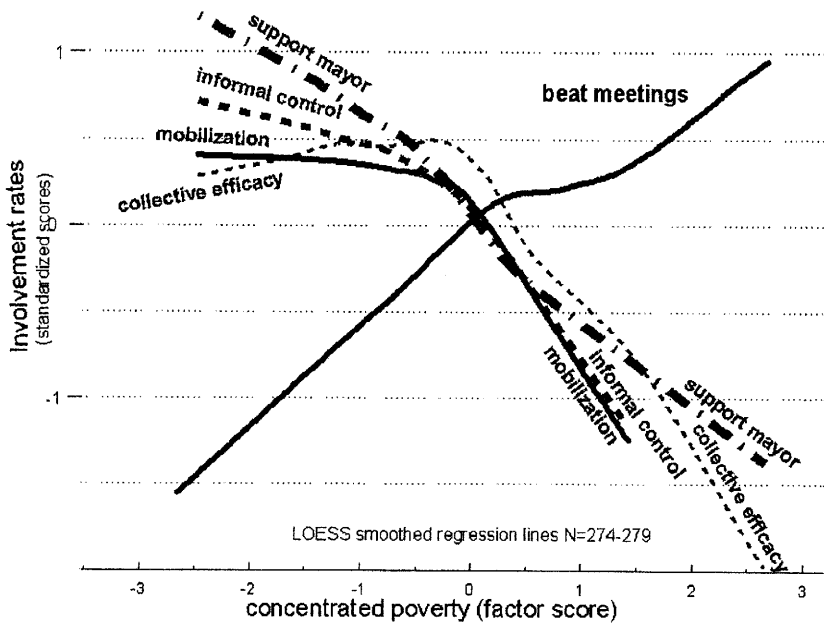


Figure 1

It is readily apparent in Figure 1 that all of the bottom-up forms of collective action that are examined here – community mobilization, informal social control, collective efficacy and political alliances with the establishment – were negatively related to neighborhood poverty. Places where more people were living in poverty and receiving public financial assistance, and where households were headed by females with many children, were less capable of mobilizing in their own defense.

To illustrate the magnitude of the difference in support for the incumbent mayor across the poverty dimension, in the 25 percent of the best-off beats he received an average of 85 percent of all votes cast, while in the 25 percent of poorest areas he received an average of 43 percent of the vote – larger by a factor of 2.0. In the original collective efficacy survey, the percentage of respondents who agreed that people in the neighborhood can be trusted stood at 69 percent in the best-off areas, and 50 percent in the poorest, while the figures for responses to a question about neighbors getting along were 83 percent and 59 percent, respectively. The percentages who thought their neighbors would intervene to stop youths defacing a building were 86 percent and 62 percent, in the most and least affluent areas.

It is striking, therefore, that the opportunities for participation created by the top-down, state-sponsored strategy created by the city's policing program did not reflect this pattern. Instead, beat meeting attendance *rose* with concentrated poverty, and was highest by far in the poorest communities. To illustrate the magnitude of the difference in attendance rates from the bottom to the top of the concentrated poverty distribution, in the 25 percent of the best-off beats the average monthly attendance rate was 15.9 per 10,000 adult residents, while in the 25 percent of poorest areas the average attendance rate was 39.4 per 10,000 adult residents – larger by a factor of 2.5.

Figure 1 presents a rich illustration of these relationships. A plot of standard linear regression lines linking community involvement to poverty would display sharply negative slopes for the bottom-up community processes and a sharply positive slope for top-down beat meetings. However, a visual inspection of the Loess plots presented here suggests that future research could focus on *tipping points* in the potential effectiveness of community crime control processes. Figure 1 suggests that community mobilization and collective efficacy (which were measured using different surveys) were relatively invariant with regard to neighborhood poverty in areas where poverty was relatively low. The regression lines were relatively flat across lower levels of concentrated poverty, but then plummeted once a tipping point was reached. Informal social control also exhibited an apparent tipping point.

Inspection of the clusters of beats just above and below the inflection point indicates that race was implicated in this shifting pattern. The three groups of 30 beats each in the poverty range leading up to the tipping points for community mobilization and collective efficacy had median percentages African American of 7.2, 14.3 and 5.4 percent, respectively. The three groups of 30 beats immediately after the tipping point were at the median 38.0, 36.5 and 93.6 percent African American. The link between allegiance to the political establishment and poverty was more linear, on the other hand. Poorer areas provided the incumbent mayor with less support, while voters in better-off constituencies were part of his electoral coalition. Like the other forms of bottom-up community defense, the disadvantages which accrued to areas who supported his opponent were largely borne by African Americans. As Table 2 below (to be discussed later) indicates, the beat-level correlation between percent African American and electoral support for the mayor in the 1999 election was -.96, one of the stronger correlations in social science.

5. Findings: Neighborhood Correlates of Collective Action

The stark contrast between bottom-up and top-down opportunities for collective action in neighborhoods characterized by different levels of concentrated poverty is mirrored in broader social patterns with implications for crime control and community revitalization. Beat meeting turnout was highest in poor, high-crime, fearful, physically deteriorated communities where trust in the police was greatly in need of repair – in short, the places most needing to shore up their defenses against crime and disorder. By contrast, bottom-up opportunities for collective action were all more apparent in places that currently needed the least help defending themselves. If the city relied just on autonomous voluntary action to provide neighborhood self-policing, these bottom-up processes would work to *reinforce* the current distribution of privilege, in the form of safe and secure community life.

	informal social control	neighborhood mobilization	collective efficacy	support for the mayor	beat meeting turnout
poverty and race					
concentrated poverty	-0,38	-0,31	-0,39	-0,48	0,36
percent black	-0,12	-0,14	-0,30	-0,96	0,53
percent white	0,44	0,40	0,43	0,76	-0,50
percent hispanic	-0,35	-0,24	-0,03	0,58	-0,24
percent home owners	0,31	0,39	0,54	0,28	-0,25
percent college graduates (log)	0,45	0,33	0,39	0,21	-0,25
physical condition					
pct housing units vacant (log)	-0,26	-0,28	-0,53	-0,50	0,38
building code court citation rate	-0,30	-0,29	-0,36	-0,44	0,43
dilapidation rating (observers)	-0,26	-0,30	-0,53	-0,66	0,42
physical decay (survey)	-0,53	-0,46	-0,28	-0,12	0,12
crime and disorder					
personal crime rate (log)	-0,30	-0,32	-0,51	-0,78	0,71
gun crime rate (log)	-0,35	-0,34	-0,47	-0,77	0,66
property crime rate (log)	0,03	0,00	-0,13	-0,27	0,48
residential burglary (log)	-0,12	-0,12	-0,19	-0,36	0,31
gang problems (survey)	-0,52	-0,47	-0,45	-0,26	0,30
drug problems (survey)	-0,52	-0,48	-0,45	-0,54	0,34
social disorder (survey)	-0,57	-0,50	-0,38	-0,26	0,23
fear crime (survey)	-0,50	-0,43	-0,34	-0,32	0,33
views of the police					
responsive to neighborhood concerns	0,36	0,37	0,36	0,46	-0,25
too aggressive on the street	-0,37	-0,35	-0,42	-0,58	0,46

Note: N=274-279; all correlations significant $p > .000$

Table 1

Table 1 contrasts the neighborhood correlates of bottom-up and top-town collective action. The poverty and race indicators presented in Table 1 include the concentrated poverty measure itself, along with measures of the racial distribution in each beat. All of the correlations presented there were statistically significant, but this is a descriptive rather than hypothesis-testing presentation. The social correlates of beat meeting involvement generally are the reverse of those lying behind bottom-up mechanisms for controlling crime. Bottom-up involvement was skewed toward better-off areas. More affluent areas and beats with higher concentrations of educated residents and single family homes were more likely to be the places where informal social control, neighborhood mobilization, collective efficacy and alignment with the incumbent mayor were strong. Hispanics in Chicago present a more complicated picture. Many of them are newcomers to the city, and a high percentage are immigrants or 2nd generation Americans. As a group they are not particularly well off and they do not score highly on measures of either bottom-up or top-down involvement. However, the city's established leaders have worked hard to secure their electoral support, and have cemented them to their political coalition with jobs and visible appointments to government posts. The results of this can be read in their support for the mayor's reelection effort. In a

city that is closely balanced racially, strategic political positioning can promise to reap significant benefits.

Table 1 also illustrates the relationship between measures of neighborhood problems and collective responses to crime and disorder. Four measures of the physical condition of each beat are presented in Table 1. One is the rate at which official building code violations were identified in each area; another is the average of ratings given the condition of buildings located in the beat, by city inspectors who classed each as good, as in need of minor or major repairs, or in dilapidated condition. The pattern identified in Table 1 was repeated in survey-based as well as official measures of the extent of decay. In the evaluation surveys respondents were asked "how big a problem" they viewed abandoned cars, abandoned buildings, graffiti, and "vacant lots filled with trash and junk." Their responses were averaged to form a multi-item survey measure that was then aggregated to the beat level. Finally, Table 1 presents the percentage of housing units in each area that were standing empty during the 2000 Census.

In brief summary, by every measure, bottom-up involvement was higher in nicer, better-housed areas. "Good" inspection ratings and low rates of court citations for building code violations were most common in beats reporting high collective efficacy and strongly support for the incumbent mayor, as was housing unit abandonment. By contrast, beat meeting attendance was higher in deteriorating communities, especially those facing more court cases, poor ratings by building inspectors, and housing units standing vacant. The physical decay of its neighborhoods was one of the targets of the Chicago's community policing program, which instituted procedures for focusing city services on problems identified at beat meetings. The Chicago evaluation indicated that deterioration was on residents' minds. When we surveyed residents of one of city's highest crime neighborhoods, one of the most highly ranked problems was abandoned buildings; in another rough area, two of the top four problems were graffiti and vandalism of parked cars (Skogan & Hartnett 1996). Beat meetings took seriously the public's definition of its problems, which inevitably lead police to get involved in a wide range of problem solving efforts.

The pattern of low involvement in bottom-up collective action was just as true when considering beats plagued by high rates of personal and gun crime, and (more weakly) residential burglary. Based on both a broad measure (all personal crimes) and a narrow measure of serious violence (gun crimes), all forms of bottom-up involvement were noticeably less common in more violent areas. Property crimes are more broadly distributed throughout the city, attracted by affluence as well as opportunity, but in places where it was higher, attendance at beat meetings was higher. This pattern was repeated in survey-based rather than official measures of the extent of crime. Table 1 also examines the distribution of aggregated survey measures of the extent of resident concern about gangs ("shootings and violence by gangs"), drugs ("drug dealing on the streets") and social disorder. The latter measure was composed of responses to questions about the extent of public drinking, disruption in and around local schools, and bands of youths loitering in the area. Neighborhood-level estimates of the extent of fear of crime are also examined in Table 1. Fear was measured by combining responses to two questions: "how safe do you feel or would you feel being alone outside in your neighborhood at night?" and "how often does worry about crime prevent you from doing the things you would like to in your neighborhood?" Table 1 documents that opportunities for

bottom-up responses to crime were particularly limited in places more plagued by crime, disorder and fear. The only collective response that was positively linked to troubling neighborhood conditions was beat meeting turnout.

Finally, the evaluation surveys indicate that bottom-up responses to crime and disorder promise to be more effective in places that already get along with the police. One beat-level measure of local relationships with the police is based on aggregated responses to a three-item survey measure of how responsive local police are perceived to be to community concerns and priorities. As Table 1 indicates, beats believed to be better served by police were also more likely to be informally organized, acting in their own defense, and linked to the political establishment. On the other hand, responses to a two-item measure of how aggressively police are believed to treat neighborhood residents reveals that places that were critical of the police behavior were more dependent upon them. Beats where more residents thought police “stop too many people” and that they were “too tough on people they stop” were less capable of mounting an independent defense of their communities. However, they still supported the highest beat meeting attendance rate. How could this happen? Partly it is because the older, long-term residents who attended beat meetings in disproportionate numbers everywhere were more positive about the police than were their younger counterparts. But in addition, research by Carr, Napolitano and Keating (2007) highlights the dual perspective that residents of high-crime areas take on the police. Their interviews revealed that youth reported negative experiences that colored their view of the police, but that they continued to see a crucial role for police in responding to crime in their own, dangerous neighborhoods. They feared the police, but they also feared crime.

6. Discussion

In short, across a variety of measures, the potential benefits of naturally-occurring, bottom-up community defense mechanisms flow disproportionately to better-off home owners and racial majorities living in lower-crime, less-troubled communities that already get along with the police. On the other hand, Chicago's top-down beat meetings successfully created opportunities for involvement in poorer, more dilapidated and crime-ridden areas that were plagued by gang, drug and social disorder problems, and where the general population did not like the police very much. Did beat meetings make a difference in neighborhood life? A review of the effectiveness of the entire community policing effort in which beat meetings were embedded is presented in Skogan & Hartnett (1997). In summary, we found modest but consistently positive program effects. Neighborhood physical decay and social disorder went down, fear of crime declines, and many measures of crime, drug and gang problems pointed to decreases that could be attributed to the program. There was no evidence of crime displacement. A very substantial percentage of beat meeting participants reported getting involved in other community problem solving efforts. A largely unstated goal of the program was to improve the image of the police in the city's poor neighborhoods, and during a decade of evaluation perceptions of the police grew more positive among both Latinos and African-Americans.

The central policy question raised by this research is *why* it was that a top-down, police-driven program to involve residents in crime prevention was uniquely successful in being redistributive, providing a chance for involvement in places that were otherwise

largely denuded of opportunities for self-regulation. Based on our research, there are at least four reasons why this was the case.

First, the city evened the playing field by creating *equal opportunities to participate* all over the city. A major factor shaping involvement in community organizations is the sheer availability of opportunities to do so, and these opportunities tend to be much fewer in poor communities (Skogan, 1988). Chicago's community policing plan was intended to level the playing field. Police officers and civilian community organizers who were hired to support the program opened the doors for an evening meeting in every residential area of the city, virtually every month. Police found safe locations to hold them that were conveniently located in each beat, and senior citizens and women turned out in large numbers after dark. Police officers and volunteer translators worked to involve non-English speakers. A substantial number of officers, many of whom worked in the immediate area, attended each meeting. In our data, meeting frequency and the number of officers who attended was not correlated with a community's class, race, crime rate or the strength of its community organizations.

Second, a great deal of effort went into generating *widespread awareness of the opportunity to participate* created by beat meetings. Because they were new, as well as being a key component of the city's community policing initiative, Chicago launched an aggressive and fairly expensive program to market community policing to the general public. Promotional announcements appeared on television and radio, posters hung at rapid transit stops, and program materials were displayed at libraries and churches. Neighborhood leaders were invited to sessions featuring the mayor and the chief of police where they were exhorted to support the program. Civilian community organizers walked door-to-door passing out flyers advertising the meetings. By the early 2000s, our surveys indicated that just over 60 percent of adults were aware that beat meetings were being held in their area (Skogan, 2006).

Third, the *police and organizers were persistent*. They stuck with the program, and the average beat met almost 11 times per year. They did not get discouraged if only a few people showed up, and the meetings continued to be held even in low-attendance areas. This persistence gave the program time to build a constituency. Further, the continuity meant that meetings were already scheduled when residents decided they needed them. Even in low-turnout areas there were spikes in attendance following outbreaks of "signal crimes" (Innes, 2004) that commanded public and media attention. Residents in turn flocked to the meetings – for a while – to discover why the unexpected was occurring. Patrick Carr (2012) describes exactly how this happened following a double murder in an otherwise relatively quiet Chicago neighborhood. Because there was not much variation in how frequently beats met, these data cannot shed much light on the question of how frequently they should be held, but because they are an expensive item this could be a topic for further research.

Fourth, *attendance was rational and instrumental*. Unlike most of the bottom-up forms of involvement examined here, participation did not depend upon feelings of solidarity or trust. Sampson & Raudenbush (1999, p. 610) put the case for parochial self-policing as follows: "participation in social exchange, friend/kinship ties, and affective identification with the local area increases mutual trust and shared expectations for collective action in support of the neighborhood." However, these features of neighborhood life are

vulnerable to the realities associated with living in concentrated poverty. These include disrupted schools, abandoned commercial areas, shuttered mainstream churches, and rapid population turnover. Mutual trust, neighboring, and other forms of social interaction are also actively undermined by crime, which erodes trust in neighbors (and their children), discourages casual social interaction, and empties the streets at night. Sampson & Jenglum-Bartusch (1998) argue that anonymity and social mistrust blocks communities in their quest to realize their values, and that these are promoted by concentrated poverty and crime.

By contrast, attendance at beat meeting was driven by cognitive rather than affective considerations. In our surveys, participants reported that they saw direct benefits for their immediate community from initiatives that began in beat meetings. Participation was directly driven by crime. Statistically, violent crime was closely linked to attendance rates, and our surveys of residents attending the meetings found that they were more concerned about crime than were even their immediate neighbors. Attendance rates were highest in the city's poorest African American neighborhoods because that is where violent crime was concentrated, and where alternatives to beat meetings were difficult to find.

This is not to say that "home-grown," bottom-up mechanisms for community self-policing are not important, or should not be nurtured. However, in its "natural state" collective efficacy, informal control, and political mechanisms for promoting community safety are very differentially distributed, and largely remain an advantage enjoyed by better-off communities. The real policy question is, How can the defenses of poor communities be augmented? One possible response – which cannot be tested with the data at hand – is that top-down, state-sponsored initiatives like beat meetings could in the long run encourage and nurture the growth of bottom-up community self-regulation. The meetings provided a safe environment that facilitated acquaintance-making and informal networking among participants. The meetings kept them informed of events in the community, and connected them to agencies that deliver services. Participants on their own solicited personal contact information from others at the meetings in order to assemble "telephone trees" that enabled them to spread messages quickly through the community. The regulars who attended frequently (about one-third of those present at any particular meeting) came to share a sense of their neighborhood's problems and the priorities of other active participants, and they came to know a number of officers who worked regularly in the community (Skogan, 2006). Rather than substituting for self-regulation, the meetings might in time help rebuild civil society in places that need it the most.

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