Communities, Crime, and Neighborhood Organization

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It is widely believed that voluntary action by neighborhood residents can play an important role in maintaining order. However, the ability of individuals to act in defense of their community is constrained by the opportunities for action that are available to them. Participation in collective efforts against crime is confined to places where the existence of local organizations makes that possible. The distribution of group activity across the metropolitan landscape thus defines the "opportunity structure" for local collective action. This article examines the impact of serious crime, the economic and social resources residents have to draw upon to deal with neighborhood problems, and their characteristic relationships with the police, upon those opportunities to participate in organized efforts to combat crime.

There is great interest in the role that community organizations can play in combating crime. The "coproduction" perspective, which dominates both community crime prevention theory and the development of community policing strategies, assumes that voluntary action by neighborhood residents can play an important role in maintaining order in a cost-effective and constitutional manner. However, it is not automatic that this voluntary activity will be forthcoming, even in the face of threatening crime problems. The ability of individuals to act in defense of their community is shaped in important ways by the opportunities for action that are available to them. This is particularly

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important when the locus of action shifts from the household level to collective action at the neighborhood level. While many forms of coproduction involve privatistic efforts toward securing safety, participation in collective efforts to combat crime by and large is confined to times and places where the existence of local organizations makes that possible. The distribution of group activity across the metropolitan landscape thus defines the "opportunity structure" for collective action (Stinchcombe, 1968). Who participates depends upon what opportunities are available, and neighborhoods differ in the opportunities they present. Nationwide, only about 20% of households are located in areas where those opportunities present themselves (Whitaker, 1986). The dominant policy questions therefore seem to be, how can local organizations be encouraged to adopt a crime prevention agenda, and how can new anticrime groups be spawned in areas where none were active (see Skogan, 1988; Lewis, Grant, and Rosenbaum, 1988)?

Research on community organization reveals that these are complex questions that have not been adequately addressed. The results of past research often seem contradictory. Despite their focus, anticrime organizations actually may be less common in high-crime places than in safer neighborhoods; the same factors that generate crime also may erode the social bases for collective action. Organizations also may be as infrequent in tightly knit communities (which we do not commonly think of as "disorganized") as they are in more anomic areas; residents of cohesive areas have informal ways of dealing with local problems. There is also a great deal of evidence that neighborhood organizations emerge and endure more easily in better-off areas, lending a "middle-class bias" to the benefits of voluntary action. However, affluent areas are not those that are beset with the worst crime problems. Finally, organizations can be both pro- and antipolice, and it is not clear if they garner more recognition and support in places where encounters between area residents and the police are cooperative or adversarial. There is some evidence that organizing efforts can be facilitated by the police, but other research suggests that anticrime organizations arise instead in response to the failure of the state to protect its citizens.

This article tests these competing hypotheses. It examines the impact of serious crime, the economic and social resources residents have to draw upon to tackle local problems, and their characteristic relationships with the police, upon the distribution of organized efforts to combat crime. It is based on an analysis of data spanning 60 city and suburban neighborhoods in three metropolitan areas. An important aspect of this research is that it tests these hypotheses at the community

level. Most research on participation has been cast at the individual level. However, many of the important theoretical and policy questions concerning community organizations are about the effect of neighborhood conditions and events on levels of collective behavior. A number of the key constructs in the model of collective behavior that are developed here also are spatial in character, and have policy implications principally at that level; these include the distribution of crime and police services. Therefore, for the analysis that follows, interviews with more than 12,000 survey respondents were aggregated to produce neighborhood-level measures of key aspects of the model. Because all of the hypotheses to be explored below then are interrelated, the article does not test them individually. Rather, it employs a single structural equation model to examine jointly the often conflicting expectations about community efforts to respond collectively to crime problems.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION AND CRIME

The first question to be examined here concerns the impact of crime upon the collective capacity of communities to exercise control over local conditions. There are several competing views about what the relationship looks like: It could be positive, negative, or curvilinear.

The *positive* view is that crime problems stimulate action. For example, Durkheim argued that crime has an integrative function—it shocks the sentiments of ordinary people by threatening their lives, property, and views of appropriate behavior. This affront to their values leads them to act individually and collectively in order to "do something" in response (see Conklin, 1975). The belief that, because people live in high-crime and fear-provoking neighborhoods, they *ought* therefore to mobilize themselves through the formation of neighborhood organizations, provided the impetus for several federal crime prevention programs during the 1970s (Lewis, 1979). Attempts to scare people into protecting themselves—into fastening their seat belts or quitting smoking—are based on a similar hypothesis.

The *negative* view is that problems actually discourage constructive responses. For example, research indicates that fear of crime does not appear to stimulate crime prevention behavior (Tyler and Lavrakas, 1986; Tyler, 1984; Lavrakas, 1981). In fact, surveys and experiments generally indicate that high levels of fear reduce people's willingness to

take action—including simply calling the police when they witness crimes. Past research suggests several reasons why crime might undermine a community's capacity to act collectively.

First, perceptions registered in surveys that "neighbors help each other" appear to be an important indicator of morale in urban communities, and are related to a variety of positive actions against crime (Lavrakas, 1981). Without such support, people could feel powerless, impotent, and vulnerable in the face of crime. In past studies, high levels of crime appear to have undermined the belief that problems can be solved locally, increased people's sense of personal isolation, and spread the perception that no one would come to their rescue when they found themselves in trouble (Lewis and Salem, 1986).

Second, the threat of crime can decrease the area that individuals feel responsible for defending. When the boundaries of their personal space are expansive, neighborhood residents monitor the behavior of more youths, watch more strangers, and investigate more suspicious sounds and activities. Where territories encompass only people's own homes and families, untended persons and property are fair game. There is some evidence (summarized in Shotland and Goodstein, 1984; Goodstein, 1980) that crime is encouraged by low levels of surveillance of public places, and reduced by widespread willingness to challenge strangers, supervise youths, and step forward as witnesses.

However, in crime-ridden neighborhoods, mutual distrust and hostility are rampant, and antipathy between newcomers and long-term residents prevails in areas undergoing change. Residents of poor, heterogeneous areas tend to view each other with suspicion (Taub, Taylor, and Dunham, 1984; Greenberg, Rohe, and Williams, 1982; Taylor, Gottfredson, and Brower, 1981; Boggs, 1971). Rosenbaum (1987) and Greenberg (1983) conclude that crime prevention programs requiring social contact and neighborhood cooperation are less often successful in heterogeneous areas and those with high levels of fear. Crime is corrosive, for it undermines trust among neighbors. This violates one of the assumptions behind Neighborhood Watch and other programs that attempt to promote mutual cooperation to prevent crime—it may not seem wise to inform the neighbors that you will be out of town when it is their children whom you fear (Greenberg, 1983).

Thus past research supports hypotheses that there are either positive or inverse relationships between area crime and collective action. A somewhat more complex hypothesis is that excessive levels of concern are debilitating, but moderate levels of concern are constructive. Those who think their area has virtually "no problems" might find few reasons

to engage in problem-solving activities, whereas at the high end of the scale, demoralization and distrust may prevail. Hope (1988) found in Britain that middle-range levels of concern about crime—but not high or low levels of concern—were most strongly related to support for Neighborhood Watch. Garofalo and McLeod (1988, p. 3) note that "programs in stable, low-crime neighborhoods do not give participants enough to do . . . ," while in contrast "crime in other neighborhoods may be so frequent and deep-rooted that the relatively mild intervention represented by Neighborhood Watch may be seen as insufficient to deal with the problem." All this suggests that the effect of crime on the extent of neighborhood organization is *curvilinear*. We should look for instances in which collective problem solving goes up at first, and then—at some "tipping point"—drops again in the face of mounting levels of crime.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A second, widely discussed question concerns the social conditions that facilitate the emergence of community organizations. There is evidence that they may run counter to those that give rise to serious crime problems, and that, as a consequence, it may be easiest to organize communities that are less in need.

There is considerable evidence of a class bias in the opportunity structure created by the distribution of avenues for participation in collective efforts against crime. Both individual and area-level studies of anticrime organizations point to this conclusion. Surveys indicate that those who are better off, more educated, home-owning, and long-term area residents more frequently know of opportunities to participate in anticrime organizations and are more likely to participate in them when they have the opportunity (Schneider, 1986; Whitaker, 1986; Greenberg, Rohe, and Williams, 1984; Lavrakas and Herz, 1982; Podolefsky and Dubow, 1981; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981). Studies of the geographical distribution of community organizations focusing on crime problems indicate that they are less common in poorer, renting, high-turnover, high-crime areas (Garofalo and McLeod, 1988; Silloway and McPherson, 1985; Kohfeld, Salert, and Schoenberg, 1983; Henig, 1978, 1982). The irony, of course, is that better-off, racially dominant city

neighborhoods usually enjoy the lowest rates of crime, and crime drops off even more substantially in the suburbs.

These correlational findings were confirmed in the recent field experiment in which professional organizers attempted to create new crime-prevention block clubs in selected ares of Minneapolis. Despite the fact that the bulk of their grassroots organizing efforts were concentrated in poorer target areas, they were more successful in getting people out to meetings in better-off neighborhoods (Pate, McPherson, and Silloway, 1987).

A second resource that is differentially distributed across communities is their capacity for informal problem solving. One hypothesis is that organizations emerge and persist most easily in the most cohesive communities, those where residents are bound together by ethnic solidarity, church and family ties, and intimate acquaintance. However, it also may be that the relationship between the density of local organization and indicators of community cohesion is curvilinear instead (Podolefsky and Dubow, 1981). Organized problem solving may be least common at both the low and high ends of the spectrum, for different reasons. At the low end, area residents are wary of one another and feel only weakly attached to their community; activities that require frequent contact and cooperation between neighbors are less likely to be found in areas characterized by crime and fear. At the high end of neighborhood cohesiveness, deeply entrenched informal networks may substitute for formal organizations. Group formation may be most common in middle-class areas knit by fewer close ties, but where residents are accustomed to utilizing formal organizations for instrumental problem solving (Skogan, 1988).

Thus although we could consider affluence and cohesion as neighborhood resources that could be drawn upon to solve local problems, there are conflicting expectations about how they might be related to the extent of organized activity in a community. Affluence and cohesion also are potentially confounded with the distribution of crime, and with each other.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION AND THE POLICE

The final question to be examined here is the role of the police. To some extent, the relationship between crime and collective organization

may be mediated by the role of police in the community. The relationship between neighborhood residents and the police may be cooperative or conflicting, and this may have consequences for the character of organizing efforts in the area.

Support for the "cooperation" hypothesis is illustrated by a recent study by Garofalo and McLeod (1986, 1988), which concluded that almost all of the enduring Neighborhood Watch organizations they studied enjoyed the active support of local police. Police provided these groups with information, training, technical support, and equipment. Police can also lend visibility, continuity, and legitimacy to initial efforts to organize communities; an evaluation of community organizing in Houston suggests that they may be able to do so with surprising effectiveness (Brown and Wycoff, 1987). This is one of the fundamental tenants of "community policing." A recent book on that topic by Skolnick and Bayley (1986), evaluations collected by Rosenbaum (1986), and articles by Sherman (1986) and Kelling (1987) all assume that community policing involves a commitment to "helping neighborhoods help themselves" by serving as a catalyst for local organizing and education efforts. Commitment to community policing usually goes arm-in-arm with the belief that police alone can neither create or maintain safe communities. Rather, they need to help set in motion voluntary local efforts to prevent disorder and crime. In this role, the police are seen as valuable adjuncts to community crime prevention programs, and vice versa.

The other side of this observation is McDowell and Loftin's (1983) "collective security" hypothesis. In a study of firearm ownership, they make the larger argument that people more often do things to protect themselves and their families when they think they must—when the police and other agents of the state seemingly fail to protect them adequately. This "self-help" (Smith and Uchida, 1988) may involve gun ownership or installing burglar alarms; in this case, it may also involve organizing collectively to deal with unresolved crime problems. If this is the case, we should find more extensive organizing efforts in places where the police are perceived to be failing in their duty.

The problem for American cities is that residents of poor and minority neighborhoods with serious crime problems often have antagonistic relationships with the police. The police are another of their problems; they frequently are perceived to be arrogant, brutal, racist, and corrupt. Groups representing these neighborhoods will not automatically look to the police for legitimacy and guidance; rather, they are likely to be involved in monitoring police misconduct and

pressing for their greater political accountability. In the 1960s, black communities could be found organizing to protect themselves *from* the police (Marx and Archer, 1971). In poor neighborhoods, community groups can make progress only by extracting resources from the outside; thus they are much less likely than groups in better-off areas to accept a narrow, technical view of "crime prevention activity," or to see it as a high-priority solution for the problems facing their constituents. More, and more intensive, policing in areas they represent could seem as likely to generate new complaints about harassment, indiscriminate searches, and conflicts between police and area youths, as it would to solve serious crime problems. Groups in these areas are more likely to point with alarm to "the causes of crime" in their area, and press for jobs, better housing, and health care. As a result, residents of poor and sometimes high-crime neighborhoods with troubled relationships with the police may be served by few organizations explicitly concerned about crime problems.

THIS RESEARCH

Past research has yielded a confusing set of expectations with respect to the distribution of anticrime organizations. First, they may be more or less common in high-crime places. Second, they may be as uncommon in cohesive as in fragmented neighborhoods, and most frequently found in better-off areas where crime rates are lower. Finally, they may be formed more easily in places where encounters between residents and the police are supportive, but those may be places where crime problems are less pervasive.

This report systematically examines all of these relationships, using data from a large, multicity study of citizen awareness and participation in community organizations and contacts with the police.[1] Telephone interviews were conducted with about 200 respondents (selected from households found randomly in telephone directories) in each of 60 primarily residential neighborhoods. The areas ranged from 0.2 to 3.8 square miles in size, and were selected to vary along racial and income lines. They were divided among the central cities and suburbs of three metropolitan areas: Rochester, New York, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida, and St. Louis, Missouri. The neighborhoods ranged from 0% to 100% white, 40% to 99% home owners, 37% to 96% high school

graduates, and 19% to 58% recent crime victims. Survey respondents were questioned about their awareness of local organizations engaged in a variety of crime-related activities, their relations with their neighbors, and about their perceptions of the quality of police service in the area.

To examine the conflicting hypotheses of interest here, these data were *aggregated* to produce area-level indicators of the distribution of the neighborhood features of interest. The hypotheses—involving victimization rates, neighborhood affluence and cohesion, and relationships with the police—were all then tested at the community level. To do this, the interviews from each area first were weighted to standardize the sex distribution of each area, and to count appropriately respondents representing larger households.[2] Composite measures were calculated at the individual level. Then, means and proportions for the variables of interest were calculated for each of the 60 areas. A few area-level measures were transformed to normalize their distributions.

THE MEASURES

The *extent of organized activity* in each area was measured by using survey respondents as informants about events in their immediate neighborhoods. Area activity levels were scored by summing their responses to three questions concerning respondent's awareness of "volunteer citizens patrolling residential areas," groups "that encourage citizens to undertake crime prevention efforts," and groups "that work to improve police-community relations." In each case, the questions referred to in an area "two or three blocks around your home." This survey-based measure of local organizational activity weights the number of groups in an area by the visibility of their activities. The components of the area-level measure employed here were substantially intercorrelated: Awareness of patrols was correlated .58 with awareness of prevention groups and .69 with awareness of police-community relations groups, and the prevention and community relations measures were correlated .79.

The *extent of local crime problems* was measured by combining reports that area residents had been victimized by robbery, burglary, assault, purse snatching, pocket picking, or auto theft during the 12 months before the interview. The measure is the principal component factor for these items; it explains 55% of their total variance.

Community affluence was measured by a factor score representing the variance shared by measures of the extent of area home ownership, mean income, average years of education, and the proportion of dwelling units that were single family homes rather than in multifamily buildings. These items were single factored.

Area cohesiveness was measured by mean responses to a question concerning how frequently respondents "get together with neighbors in their homes or yours," a common measure of the extent of neighboring.

The *quality of police service* was measured by summing responses to questions about the honesty, courtesy, and equal treatment rendered by local police, and two questions concerning the overall quality of police service in the immediate area. The reliability of the measure is .77. This scale reflects the extent of general satisfaction with what police were doing in the communities.

In addition, the analysis presented below utilized measures of the *racial composition* of the areas (percentage black), whether each area was in a *central city or a suburb*, and a factor score representing areas with large numbers of children and younger adults (dubbed *young families* below).

Using these measures, the hypotheses were all evaluated at the same time, in the context of a structural equation model of the relationships between the constructs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Figure 1 presents the most plausible model describing the relationships among these measures of neighborhood crime, community resources, police service, and other key features of these 60 neighborhoods. The path coefficients presented there indicate the direction and relative strength of each of the relationships. The model in Figure 1 is the most plausible for these data for three reasons: It provides a good statistical description of the data, it parsimoniously represents all important paths between the variables, and it conforms with 70 years of research on urban communities.

The statistical properties of the model can be assessed by the overall fit of the model to the data and the likelihood that this could be achieved by chance (Wheaton, 1987). The chi-square probability of .11 for this model is acceptable (greater than .05); this indicates that the residuals

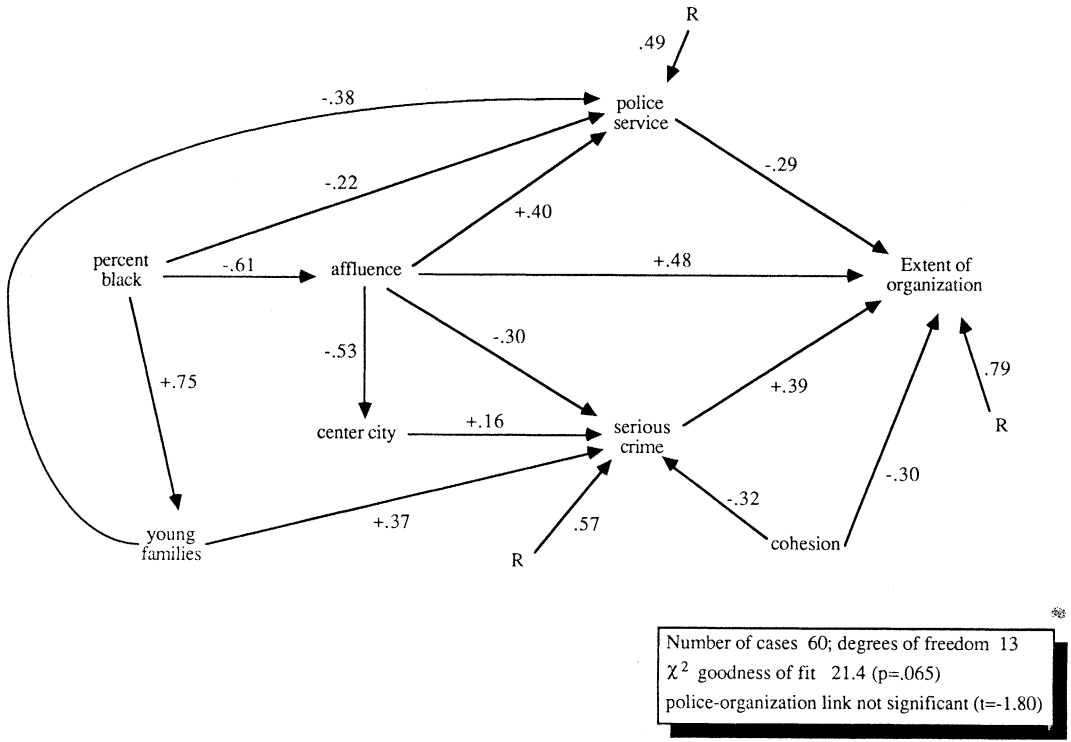

Figure 1: Model of Hypothesized Linkages

from the modeled relationships are unlikely to be due to other than chance. Delta-2 (Bollen, 1986, in press) for the model is .94. This is a measure of the improvement the model provides over an alternative "null" model that hypothesizes there is no relationship at all between the constructs; it is analogous to an overall R-square for the model, adjusted for degrees of freedom.[3]

With one exception, every causal arrow depicted in Figure 1 is statistically significant (a two-tailed $p > .05$), and there are no significant relationships between any of the measures that are not represented there by an arrow. The exception to this rule is the link between assessments of the quality of local police service and the extent of local organization. In these data, the t-value for this relationship was almost significant ($t = -1.8$). With only 60 cases, this reflects a parameter value that easily could appear significant in another study, and is worthwhile including here. Including that path in the model exhausts the possibilities for adding more linkages to it; the next largest normalized residual is then only $t = 0.98$, and including neither it nor any other plausible linkage adds to the statistical acceptability of the model. Note that the resulting model is quite parsimonious, preserving almost half of the degrees of freedom. It is a relatively simple explanation that fits the data well.

The final test of the "goodness" of the model lies in how well its "familiar" parts replicate decades of research on neighborhood social processes. This is illustrated by the linkages on the left-hand side of Figure 1. In these data, race is related in predictable ways to neighborhood poverty, demography, and crime, and residents of largely black areas perceived they received less honest, courteous, and even-handed treatment by the police. The suburban communities in the sample were more affluent and enjoyed lower levels of crime. In addition, better-off areas reported receiving better treatment by the police. Cohesion is presented as an exogenous variable in Figure 1 because it was not related to the racial, family status, income, or other demographic features of these 60 areas; however, it was clearly related to lower levels of crime. None of these are "findings." Rather, they serve to validate the general consistency of the data and the model with decades of research on neighborhood crime. This in turn lends validity to the conclusions suggested by the right-hand side of Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the central importance of area victimization, community cohesion, affluence, and policing in mediating among the extent of local organization and other important neighborhood factors. The relationship between race (percentage black) and the extent of local organization was positive ($r = +.21$), but their link was only indirect,

through the disproportionate poverty, youthfulness, and (more indirectly) high victimization rates of black neighborhoods in the sample. Neighborhoods with large numbers of young adults and children also reported higher levels of crime and less supportive relationships with the police. Whether an area was city or suburban was reflected in its affluence and crime rate, but not directly in the extent of organization there. This parallels the findings of Whitaker's (1986) national study of awareness of Neighborhood Watch groups, which also revealed no substantial city-suburban differences in the visibility of those programs. Finally, although these data came from communities in three metropolitan areas, analyses (not shown) of the effects of region indicate there were no differences among them in levels of organizational visibility once the factors in the model were taken into account.

With the inclusion of the one insignificant (but substantial) link between police service and neighborhood organization, Figure 1 suggests the following concerning the questions examined here.

(1) *Organized activity was stimulated by serious crime.* The link between the two measures was strong and positive, controlling for the effects of area affluence, cohesion, and police service. This relationship was partly disguised by the lower rate of crime in better-off areas, where residents also enjoyed wider opportunities to participate (see below). Despite some expectations to the contrary, the crime-organization relationship was linear. Bivariate plots, statistical tests, and a plot of the relationship between crime and organization, with the effects of the other independent variables removed, showed no evidence that the extent of local organizing went down in the face of extreme levels of crime.

(2) *Better-off areas were better organized, but the more cohesive they were the less they relied upon formal organization.* Controlling for the effects of cohesion and serious crime, affluent areas (with higher concentrations of home owners, higher-income households, higher levels of education, and more single-family homes) were more likely to be densely organized around crime problems. Note in Figure 1 that these were often suburban areas that enjoyed somewhat lower levels of serious crime to begin with.

On the other hand, the more intensive the level of informal "neighboring" in these areas, the less formally organized they were. Bivariate and residual plots indicate that the relationship between area cohesion and the density of formal organization was linear; awareness of local groups was steadily lower with increasing levels of area

cohesion. As Figure 1 depicts, high neighborhood cohesion had both a direct negative effect and an indirect negative effect on local organizing, the latter through its association with lower levels of crime.

(3) *There was an inverse relationship between the quality of police service and the extent of local organizational activity.* In general, organized activity around crime issues was more visible in places where residents thought they were not getting good policing. This finding supports McDowell and Loftin's (1983) collective security hypothesis—people do more to protect themselves when they feel that they are not being adequately served by the state. The role of collective security is masked to some degree by the fact that the perceived quality of policing was higher in white and affluent areas, and they also were more organized. However, the positive component of the correlation between police service and the level of local organization in these areas appears to be spurious, due to their joint dependence on class-related variables. Instead, when the other factors in the model are taken into account, people appear to be helping themselves because official mechanisms for providing security for their communities have failed.

The confounding role of neighborhood affluence is documented more clearly in Table 1, which also summarizes the effects of all of the variables in the model on the visibility of local organization efforts in the 60 neighborhoods. In Table 1, "direct" effects refer to the standardized effects of direct causal arrows in the model; for example, the effect coefficient for serious crime was .39 (see Bollen, 1987). "Indirect effects" were those mediated by other variables; an example of this is race. Analysis of the model presented in Figure 1 indicates that race had no direct effects on the extent of visible neighborhood organization; however, race was related in apparently causal fashion to other factors (such as poverty and police behavior) that did. Other variables had both kinds of effects. In the case of cohesion, the direct and indirect effects (through crime) were additive, and as a result cohesion proved to be the most influential factor in the model. On the other hand, the direct and indirect effects of neighborhood affluence tended to cancel each other out. Affluent communities offered more opportunities to participate, but residents there also relied more on the police.

This decomposition of direct and indirect effects offered in Table 1 illustrates the advantages of testing hypotheses in the light of an overall model of the processes involved, for relationships among the independent variables generally are lost in regression-based analysis.

TABLE 1: Direct and Indirect Effects on Extent of Organization

Variable	*Direct Effects*	*Indirect Effects*	*Total Effects*
affluence	.48	−.27	.21
cohesion	−.30	−.12	−.42
serious crime	.39	—	.39
police service	−.29	—	−.29
young families	—	.25	.25
race-black	—	.13	.13
center city	—	.06	.06

SOME LIMITATIONS OF THE MODEL

The findings discussed above are certainly not the last word on the topic. It is important to note the relatively large residual path for the extent of local organization that is depicted in Figure 1. This indicates that we still have more to learn (and better measures to develop) concerning the conditions under which groups are active in the community. These data discount regional-level factors, for in the context of this model there were no significant differences in the level of local organizing among the three metropolitan areas. Clearly, however, many important factors have been left out of this analysis. A list of candidate factors would include the structure of local politics in these communities (which can encourage or discourage grassroots organizations), leadership, and history and community traditions. In addition, serious crime is not the only focus of group activity. Groups also respond to "disorder" problems. These include public drinking, street harassment, rumors of drug use, littering, and building abandonment (Skogan, 1987). Groups attempting to preserve the character of their communities also respond to impending racial transition in terms of the threat of crime that that portends (Skogan, 1988). All of these factors are impossible to characterize in these data.

The causal orderings of the variables presented in Figure 1 reflect judgments and past research, and may be wrong. For example, Rosenbaum (1988a) notes that the causal path between cohesion and crime could run the other way—from crime to cohesion—if low crime engenders neighboring rather than the reverse. Over time there doubtless are feedback processes at work that even link crime and organizational factors on the right-hand side of the model with the demographic factors

(which here are "exogenous") on the left-hand side of the model. The right-hand factors may stimulate differential movement into and out of the neighborhoods, changing their very composition.

Finally, this study uses a perceptual measure of neighborhood organizational activity. As indicated above, this assumes that survey respondents can be used as informants to describe conditions around them with some reliability. The survey measures may be biased; for example, more educated respondents and those with wider friendship networks might know about more neighborhood events. However, while the former source of potential bias is congruent with the findings reported here, the latter runs contrary to them. It is also not clear that any *other* type of measurement strategy is potentially less biased. I would also argue that many of the seeming "biases" of a perceptual measure parallel biases in the structure of opportunity that is being measured, for differential awareness of opportunities to participate is part of what gives some individuals and communities advantage over others.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This analysis has focused on one element in the process of citizen involvement in crime prevention, not the product; it has examined opportunities for participation, not its consequences. A substantial amount of political capital has been invested in the assumption that local collective prevention efforts are indeed effective. There are also contrarian views on how effective local groups can actually be in dealing with crime (see Lewis, Grant, and Rosenbaum, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1988a, 1988b), and the true implications of this study hinge on which are correct. Short of knowing that, the parameters for the causal model developed here have implications only for the *possible* costs and benefits of efforts to create and sustain organized anticrime activity in high-crime metropolitan neighborhoods.

First, there is evidence here of a potential "class bias" in relying on volunteer efforts to counter neighborhood crime. This bias parallels that revealed by earlier studies: Controlling for other key factors, there were more opportunities for participation in better-off metropolitan communities. This was the strongest direct linkage in the model. The class bias problem led Rich (1980) to argue that relying upon voluntary

organizations to achieve public goals generally places poor neighborhoods at a disadvantage to middle-class ones. However, it appears that other processes can ameliorate their advantages, at least in the case of crime. A larger, "total effect" in Table 1 is that of neighborhood crime on the extent of local organization; despite some expectations to the contrary, the two were strongly related. That effect "drowned out" some of the class bias, for better-off areas also had fewer reasons to organize around crime-related issues. Class bias also was dampened somewhat by the tendency of residents of better-off areas to get along better with the police and (apparently as a result) rely upon them more heavily.

Second, there was a substantial tendency for less cohesive communities to employ more formally organized responses to crime. There may be a direct trade-off between the extent to which neighborhoods rely on more formal and less formal local prevention efforts. The effects of cohesion were both direct and indirect, and the two were cumulative. The indirect effect of cohesion documented in Figure 1, through its association with lower levels of local crime (and hence less organization around the issue), replicates 70 years of research on communities and crime. The direct link between the extent of neighboring and local organization efforts suggests that organizations of the type examined here emerge where informal problem-solving capacities are weak. Although this research cannot speak to the actual benefits of organizing around crime problems, in the aggregate they would appear to accrue to the communities that need them more.

Finally, like many studies this one found that predominantly black neighborhoods were somewhat *more* organized around crime than their counterparts; the same was true of areas with more young families. The effects of these factors were indirect, a result of the poverty and crime problems that typically plague such communities. This is some evidence that black neighborhoods in these three metropolitan areas were not completely disadvantaged with regard to the benefits that might flow from the efforts of local organizations. However, it also appears that some of this organizational capacity arises as a response to inadequate police service to black communities. The residents of older, white, and affluent areas got along better with the police, and where that was the case, residents seemed to rely more heavily on the state for defense against crime.

The finding that places enjoying better service from the police are less actively organized may seem to present a conundrum for policymakers who want to encourage voluntary efforts to combat crime at the local

level. The inference would seem to be, "give them worse policing." However, this is an analysis of naturally occurring covariation rather than the effects of planned interventions. In these data, community organizing was to some extent a response to bad policing, but organized activity was also apparent in minority areas plagued by high levels of crime and a limited capacity for informal problem solving. The effects of crime and cohesion, and the two neighborhood demographic factors, were greater than those of policing (compare their total effects in Table 1). In these areas, moving toward a community policing model in which better service is linked to sustained efforts to enhance the organizational capacity of high-crime neighborhoods might be the way to "have it both ways"—to enhance both the self-defensive capability of urban communities and the quality of the service they receive.

NOTES

1. The data were collected during the summer of 1977 for the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University and the Center for Urban and Regional Studies of the University of North Carolina, under the direction of Elinor Ostrom, Gordon Whitaker, and Roger Parks.

2. Like most surveys, these over-represented females, who are more likely to be found at home. However, gender is by far the strongest individual-level correlate of victimization, fear, and many crime-related behaviors, so artifactual differences in the sex distribution of the neighborhood samples could cloud the effects of true area-level differences. To counter this, each area sample was weighted to standardize it at 53% female, the Census Bureau's usual figure for urban populations. Because each sample household was represented by a single respondent, each of them also was weighted by the number of eligible respondents in the household, to proportionately represent members of larger households.

3. There are other fit measures that, like Delta-2, assess the improvement of a given model over a no-covariance "null" model. The Delta-1 for this model is .94, which exceeds Bentler and Bonett's (1980) rule of thumb for a good fit of .90. The Rho-1 for the model is .85, and the Rho-2 is .86. See Bollen (in press) for a discussion of all the measures. In this case, I find the consistency of the model with past research, its parsimony *and* goodness of fit, and the lack of any meaningful residuals to be explained, to be persuasive.

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