

SOURCES OF INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL IN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS*

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Why do youth in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods experience lower levels of informal social control? To answer this question, we examined multilevel data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. Using hierarchical regression, we found that (1) neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police contributed significantly to neighborhood levels of informal social control; and (2) neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police mediated a substantial portion of the association between informal social control and neighborhood levels of concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration.

For almost a century sociologists have been attempting to understand the spatial distribution of crime in urban neighborhoods (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Sampson and Groves, 1989; for reviews, see Sampson, et al. 2002; Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994). Beginning with the work of Shaw and McKay (1942) and continuing to the present, research has shown consistently that where there are high levels of crime, there also tend to be high levels of structural disadvantage—that is, poverty, segregation and

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residential instability. Moreover, at the time of this writing, strong consensus has emerged among sociologists working in the social disorganization tradition that a key mechanism explaining the link between structural disadvantage and crime in urban neighborhoods is low levels of informal social control (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Elliott et al., 1996; Sampson et al., 1997; Morenoff et al., 2001; for reviews see Sampson et al., 2002; Triplett et al., 2003). Thus, a critical next step in understanding the spatial distribution of crime among urban neighborhoods is to understand why structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods give rise to low levels of informal social control.

Our reading of the ecological literature suggests several mechanisms worthy of examination. These include social ties to people and organizations (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Bursik, 1988; Bellair, 1997; Morenoff et al., 2001), legal cynicism and its related constructs, anomie and cultural attenuation (Durkheim, 1897/1951; Merton, 1964; Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch, 1998; Kornhauser, 1978; Warner, 2003), neighborhood attachment (Janowitz, 1951; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Logan and Molotch, 1987), and satisfaction with police (Mastrofski et al., 1995; Mearns and Kahan, 1998; Skogan, 1990; Kelling and Coles, 1996; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). Each has been put forward as a potentially important factor contributing to informal social control in urban neighborhoods. However, few prior studies have examined the contribution that these factors make to informal social control; and none has done so within a single research design.

The current study uses data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)—a large-scale community survey—to examine the contribution that social and organizational ties, legal cynicism, neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police make to neighborhood levels of informal social control. These factors are each supported by well-developed but distinct theoretical traditions in sociology and criminology. Our purposes are: (1) to ascertain the unique contribution that each of these factors makes to neighborhood levels of informal social control; and (2) to examine the extent to which they mediate the relationship between structural disadvantage—poverty, residential mobility and immigrant concentration, for example—and informal social control. We begin with a review of the literature on informal social control.

INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

Numerous studies—the bulk of which are theoretical and come out of the social disorganization tradition—highlight the importance of informal social control for achieving low rates of neighborhood crime and deviance

(for reviews, see Sampson et al., 2002; Triplett et al., 2003; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Carr, 2003). According to Sampson (1987:104), “a community oriented approach to informal social control rests on the assumption that the only truly effective means of maintaining public norms is by neighbors assuming responsibility for one another.” Examples of informal social control may include neighbors taking note and questioning strangers, watching over each other’s property, assuming responsibility for the supervision of youth and intervening in local disturbances (Sampson, 1987; see also Stark, 1987; Bursik, 1988). In addition, Bursik (1988)—citing Kornhauser (1978) and Shaw and McKay (1942)—argues that informal social control must also include the capacity of neighborhood residents to participate in the socialization of local youth in order to instill in them a desire to avoid deviance. Thus, we conceptualize informal social control as the willingness of neighborhood residents to actively engage in behaviors aimed at preventing criminal and deviant behavior in the local area, with a particular emphasis on the deviant behavior of youth.¹

The few empirical studies that have been conducted within the social disorganization tradition suggest that informal social control is important for achieving low rates of neighborhood crime and deviance. For example, in a study of 63 Baltimore neighborhoods, Taylor et al. (1984) measured the proportion of respondents who felt responsible for what happened in the area surrounding their homes and who belonged to a neighborhood organization that included other residents. Both measures were significantly and inversely related to neighborhood rates of violence, net of other neighborhood level factors. Similarly, Simcha-Fagan and Schwartz (1986) found a significant inverse relationship between the rate of self-reported delinquency and rates of organizational participation in their study of 553 residents of twelve neighborhoods in New York City. This result was attributed to the increased capacity for informal social control that resulted from organizational participation among neighborhood residents.

1. Consistent with prior research and theory (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Elliott et al., 1996; Sampson et al., 1997; Morenoff et al., 2001), this conceptualization clearly emphasizes informal social control efforts aimed at promoting conventional behavior in the neighborhood. However, it is important to note that informal social control may also be oriented toward the production of deviant behavior. Just as law-abiding residents may attempt to inhibit deviance in the neighborhood through informal means, so too may those embedded in deviant lifestyles attempt to promote deviant behavior in others through informal means. Although seldom incorporated into studies of crime and deviance, conceptualizing informal social control as consisting of both pro- and antisocial control efforts may help to broaden our understanding of the relationship between informal control processes and local levels of crime and deviance.

In another study showing the importance of informal social control for achieving low rates of neighborhood crime and deviance, Sampson and Groves (1989), drawing on data from more than 300 communities in Great Britain, found that the density of local friendship networks was associated with lower robbery rates, and that the level of organizational participation by residents was associated with lower rates of robbery and stranger violence. The prevalence of unsupervised teenage peer groups in a community had the largest association with rates of robbery and violence by strangers, underscoring Bursik's (1988) assertion that youth socialization constitutes a central component of informal social control. Moreover, variation in these dimensions of community organization mediated, in part, the effects of community socioeconomic status, residential instability, ethnic heterogeneity and family disruption. In a similar study, Elliot and colleagues (1996), using data gathered in Chicago and Denver, found that informal social control was inversely related to problem behavior in both sites and, similar to results reported by Sampson and Groves (1989), informal social control mediated the effects of neighborhood structural disadvantage on youth problem behavior.

More recently, Sampson et al. (1997) demonstrated the importance of collective efficacy (a composite measure of informal social control and social cohesion) for achieving low rates of crime and deviance using survey data from more than 8,000 residents in 343 Chicago neighborhoods gathered in 1995. Sampson et al. found that collective efficacy was associated with lower rates of neighborhood violence, controlling for concentrated disadvantage, residential instability and immigrant concentration. Moreover, the association between these neighborhood characteristics and violence was significantly reduced when collective efficacy was controlled. Sampson et al. (1997) concluded that informal social control and social cohesion are key factors contributing to a neighborhood's capacity to limit crime and deviance within its boundaries.

Together, these studies suggest that informal social control is important for achieving low rates of neighborhood crime and deviance, and may be a key factor mediating the association between neighborhood structural characteristics—that is, poverty, residential mobility and ethnic heterogeneity—and crime. Thus, a logical next step in the evolution of this literature is to understand what gives rise to informal social control and to explain why structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to exhibit lower levels of informal social control. Toward this end, the current study examines a range of factors hypothesized in previous literature to influence informal social control in urban neighborhoods.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

What affects the capacity of urban residents to exercise informal social control over youth? Prior research and theory suggest that several factors are important: social and organizational ties, legal cynicism, neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police. We thus hypothesize a direct effect of each of these factors. That is, other things being equal, we expect each to significantly influence neighborhood levels of informal social control. We also hypothesize that each will mediate, in part, the relationship between neighborhood structure—for example, concentrated disadvantage, immigrant concentration and residential mobility—and informal social control.

SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL TIES

The first factor to consider is social and organizational ties. Beginning with Hunter (1985) and continuing with Sampson and Groves (1989) and Bursik and Grasmick (1993), informal social control has been conceptualized in terms of a "systemic model" of neighborhood social organization (see also Bursik, 1988; Sampson, 1987). The systemic model depicts the local community as a complex system of friendship and kinship networks and associational ties rooted in family life and ongoing socialization processes (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974). Based on the systemic model, several neighborhood-level factors have been identified as central to the formation of informal social control in urban neighborhoods, including social ties to friends and family, involvement in neighborhood voluntary associations and participation in service-oriented neighborhood organizations. Together, these neighborhood-level factors are believed to facilitate informal social control by increasing residents' ability to monitor and socialize teenage peer groups, to keep track of strangers in the neighborhood and to work together to solve local problems (Sampson and Groves, 1989).

Although the systemic model provided the theoretical framework for the vast majority of neighborhood effects studies published during the late 1980s and 1990s (Warner and Pierce, 1993; Warner and Rountree, 1997; Rountree and Warner, 1999; Veysey and Messner, 1999; Bellair, 1997), more recent work has begun to question the centrality of social and organizational ties as a source of informal social control (for reviews, see Sampson et al. 2002; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003; Triplett et al., 2003). First, researchers have observed that strong social ties may impede local efforts to establish social control, particularly when such ties foster friendship and kinship links between law abiding and non-law-abiding folk (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Anderson, 1999; Zatz and Portillo, 2000). Second, researchers have observed that weak ties, that is, social interactions based

on less frequent and less intimate connections, may be important for establishing informal social control because they bring together otherwise disconnected subgroups of residents within a local area (Granovetter, 1973; Bellair, 1997). These findings suggest that the relationship between social ties and informal social control is more complex than originally was posited by early proponents of the systemic approach to understanding urban crime rates.

Based on these prior studies, we hypothesize that residents enmeshed in social and organizational networks will be on average more willing to engage in informal social control than those who are less enmeshed, and that social and organizational participation will mediate in part the relationship between neighborhood structural characteristics and informal social control.

LEGAL CYNICISM

A second factor hypothesized to contribute to neighborhood levels of informal social control is legal cynicism. Legal cynicism refers to a lack of moral investment in the legitimacy of conventional norms (Sampson and Jégum-Bartusch, 1998) and is closely related to the concepts of anomie as articulated by Durkheim (1897/1951) and Merton (1964) and cultural attenuation as articulated by Kornhauser (1978) and Warner (2003). According to Merton (1964:227), anomie is a social-contextual condition in which "there is a lack of consensus on norms judged to be legitimate." At the neighborhood level, this lack of consensus is likely to foster a neighborhood environment in which "there is no longer a widely shared sense... of what goes and what does not go, of what is justly allowed by way of behavior and of what is justly prohibited, of what may be legitimately expected of people in the course of social action" (Merton 1964:226). Similarly, Kornhauser (1978:78) argued that neighborhood rates of crime and deviance depend in part on the strength of conventional values and their ability to provide effective informal social controls over the behavior of residents (for a detailed discussion of Kornhauser's views, see Warner, 2003). When conventional cultural values, such as waiting to be married to have children, staying in school and respecting other people and their property, fall into disuse the foundation on which informal social control rests is weakened and residents become uncertain of the extent to which neighbors share such values. Lack of certainty regarding the strength of shared values is likely to undermine residents' willingness to intervene to enforce conventional norms in the neighborhood.

In an empirical examination of neighborhood and individual level predictors of legal cynicism in Chicago, Sampson and Jégum-Bartusch (1998) found that neighborhoods high in poverty and socioeconomic

disadvantage exhibited the highest levels of legal cynicism. This result held with controls for neighborhood ethnic composition, residential stability and a wide range of individual characteristics including race/ethnicity, age, marital status, home ownership and length of residence. Sampson and Jégum-Bartusch (1998:798) concluded that, "the contextual reality of ecologically structured disadvantage... is the driving component behind the legal cynicism result." In other words, legal cynicism was found to be rooted in the structural context of poverty and disadvantage regardless of the individual level characteristics of the residents living in those contexts.

Based on this prior body of work, we hypothesize that neighborhoods high in legal cynicism will exhibit lower levels of informal social control and that legal cynicism will help to mediate the relationship between neighborhood structural characteristics and neighborhood levels of informal social control.

NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT

A third factor hypothesized to contribute to neighborhood levels of informal social control is neighborhood attachment. Prior studies in the urban sociology tradition make an important distinction between residents' attachments to one another (social ties) and their attachments to the neighborhood itself (place ties) (Logan and Molotch, 1987; for a review, see Woldoff, 2002). This distinction is reflected in Janowitz's (1951) notion of the "limited liability community." According to Kasarda and Janowitz (1974:329) the limited liability community represents an approach to neighborhood life in which residents may participate in social networks and local institutions and "yet be prepared to leave [their] communities if local conditions fail to satisfy their immediate needs or aspirations." This approach to neighborhood life is common among residents of structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods in which public signs of disorder and incivility are prevalent (Anderson, 1999; Warner and Pierce, 1993). Residents of such neighborhoods are likely to view themselves as "simply passing through" and may therefore be less willing to contribute to local social control efforts. Thus, in addition to measuring systemic social ties and legal cynicism, we also measure the degree of attachment that residents feel toward the neighborhoods in which they live.

Because people who feel a strong sense of attachment to their neighborhoods are likely to also feel a greater sense of responsibility for maintaining order within them, and because people living in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods are less likely to develop such attachments, we expect that higher levels of neighborhood attachment will be associated with higher levels of informal social control and that

neighborhood attachment will mediate, in part, the relationship between neighborhood structure and neighborhood levels of informal social control. Although neighborhood attachment has been examined as a dependent variable in prior studies of urban social processes (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, 1988), no prior studies have examined the extent to which it contributes (as an independent variable) to informal social control in urban neighborhoods.

SATISFACTION WITH POLICE

A fourth factor hypothesized to contribute to neighborhood levels of informal social control is satisfaction with police. Prior research suggests that residents' perceptions of police practices within their neighborhood have a substantial impact on residents' shared expectations for order (Kelling and Coles, 1996) and perceptions of institutional legitimacy (Triplett et al., 2003). Indeed, a fundamental assumption of the literature on community policing is that increasing the responsiveness of police to the concerns of local residents will stimulate residents to more effectively resist crime on their own (Mastrofski et al., 1995; Meares and Kahan, 1998; Skogan, 1990; Kelling and Coles, 1996; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Goldstein, 1990). To date, however, no empirical studies have attempted to measure the effect of satisfaction with police on residents' willingness to act in ways that promote social order in the neighborhood. As a result, we know little about the degree to which satisfaction with police contributes to informal social control in urban neighborhoods.

Our assumptions about the relationship between satisfaction with police and neighborhood levels of informal social control are based on the notion that residents share a conception of the quality of policing in the local area that affects their assessments of the costs and benefits associated with taking informal action on behalf of social control. We assume that residents prefer to live in a safe and orderly environment but that their willingness to act informally to promote such an environment varies from place to place based in part on their perceptions of, and satisfaction with, policing in the neighborhood.

Thus, we suspect that residents who live in neighborhoods in which they (and their neighbors) are generally satisfied with the services provided by police and in which the police are viewed as a legitimate, viable and responsive local resource will feel a greater sense of empowerment to intervene when confronted with local acts of deviance (for related arguments, see Tyler, 1990; Triplett et al., 2003). Specifically, we hypothesize that residents who perceive the police as satisfactorily dealing with local issues, such as preventing crime, responding to victims of crime and maintaining order on the streets, will be more willing to act informally

to promote social order in the neighborhood by intervening to prevent youth in the neighborhood from fighting, loitering, destroying property, or otherwise behaving in deviant or distasteful ways. Conversely, residents of neighborhoods in which the police are perceived as unable or unwilling to respond to local residents' calls for help may feel reluctant to act informally to promote social order on their own. In short, we posit that when satisfaction with police is low, residents will be reluctant to take the personal risks involved in acting informally to safeguard social order in the neighborhood.

Consistent with this argument, prior research by Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998) shows that satisfaction with police is significantly lower in neighborhoods that are high in crime, immigrant concentration and concentrated disadvantage, controlling for a wide range of individual characteristics, including race/ethnicity, age, marital status, home ownership and length of residence. Based on their results, Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998) conclude that neighborhood context is a key factor explaining neighborhood levels of satisfaction with police. However, Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch did not examine the association between satisfaction with police and residents' willingness to engage in informal social control. We examine it in this study.

An alternative argument regarding the relationship between satisfaction with police and informal social control is that in neighborhoods where people are satisfied with police they will be less likely to exert informal social control because they believe the police will take care of local problems. Based on this reasoning, neighborhoods with low levels of satisfaction with police should exhibit high levels of informal social control. This idea is reflected in Anderson's (1999) ethnographic work in which he observes the emergence of a set of informal self-protective measures (for example, the code of the street) due to residents' lack of faith in the ability (and willingness) law enforcement to solve local problems (for detailed discussions of Anderson's work, see Baumer 2002; Baumer et al., 2003). In our view, the key to distinguishing between these seemingly contradictory arguments lies in whether one conceptualizes informal social control as a willingness to engage in behaviors aimed at promoting order in one's surrounding area or as a willingness to engage in self-protective measures, the latter of which may indeed be associated with lower levels of satisfaction with police. We rely on the former conceptualization to guide our measurement of informal social control by focusing on residents' willingness to promote order in the neighborhood, and thus hypothesize that satisfaction with police will be positively related to neighborhood levels of informal social control and that satisfaction with police will mediate, in part, the relationship between the neighborhoods structure and neighborhood levels of informal social control.

SUMMARY

This study is designed to examine a broad range of potentially predictive factors—social and organizational ties, legal cynicism, neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police—hypothesized in prior literature to influence informal social control in urban neighborhoods and to ascertain the extent to which these factors mediate the association between informal social control and neighborhood structural characteristics. The purpose of this study is thus to adjudicate between the literatures underpinning each of the hypothesized mediating factors and to provide a rigorous empirical benchmark around which future research and theory on the sources of informal social control in urban neighborhoods may develop.²

Our foundational model may be written as follows:

$$ISC = f(SC, ST, LC, NA, SP, C)$$

where ISC refers to neighborhood informal social control, SC refers to the structural characteristics of the neighborhood, ST refers to social ties and organizational participation, LC refers to legal cynicism, NA refers to neighborhood attachment, SP refers to satisfaction with police and C refers to compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of individuals they contain (we return to this important methodological issue later in our discussion of statistical methods and procedures). Examining these hypothesized mediating factors together in a single analysis will enable us to determine the extent to which each is uniquely associated with informal social control and to ascertain the extent to which each mediates the effects of structural disadvantage.

It is important to note that because the data are cross-sectional, they cannot be used to determine the precise causal ordering among the variables. The data could, however, fail to substantiate the above hypotheses, calling into question the assumptions on which they are based. In this sense, the data in combination with the theoretical arguments

2. Many of the variables examined in this study have been presented in previous works using the PHDCN data. For example, Sampson et al. (1997) and Morenoff et al. (2001) examined the neighborhood structural characteristics, homicide rate, and friendship/kinship ties as exogenous and control variables in their seminal studies introducing collective efficacy as a cause of crime. In addition, Sampson and Jégum-Bartusch (1998) examined legal cynicism and satisfaction with police as dependent variables in a study showing that neighborhood structure (for example, concentrated disadvantage) was a more robust predictor of these outcomes than race/ethnicity. However, no prior studies have examined the effect that these and other neighborhood characteristics (for example, neighborhood attachment) have on levels of informal social control in Chicago. That is, no prior studies have modeled informal social control as a dependent variable in relation to so complete a set of theoretically derived predictors in order to understand its social origins.

outlined above provide a test of our main hypotheses (we return to the issue of causal ordering in the discussion section).

DATA AND MEASURES

Data for this study come from the Community Survey of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN). The PHDCN Community Survey was gathered in 1995 and contains information on 8,782 Chicago residents' assessments of the structural and cultural properties of their neighborhoods. To operationalize neighborhoods, Chicago's 865 census tracts were combined to create 343 "neighborhood clusters" composed of geographically contiguous and socially similar census tracts containing approximately 8,000 people each (Sampson et al., 1997; Morenoff et al., 2001). As Morenoff et al. (2001) explain, neighborhood clusters are smaller than Chicago's 77 community areas (average size = 40,000) and somewhat larger than Chicago's census tracts, which average between 2,000 and 4,000 people. To ensure that the neighborhood clusters closely approximate residents' conceptions of their local neighborhoods, major geographic boundaries (railroad tracks, parks and freeways, for example), knowledge of Chicago's local neighborhoods, and cluster analyses of census data were used to guide the construction of relatively homogeneous neighborhood clusters with respect to distributions of racial/ethnic mix, SES, housing density and family structure. According to Sampson et al. (1997:919), "the overriding consideration in forming the neighborhood clusters was that they should be as ecologically meaningful as possible," and "large enough to approximate local neighborhoods."

The Community Survey was drawn in three stages: city blocks within neighborhood clusters, dwelling units within city blocks and adult residents within dwelling units. Interviews were conducted in the subjects' homes. The response rate was 75%. After deleting cases with missing data, the final sample available for analysis in this study was 7,061 residents nested within 342 neighborhood clusters. The average number of respondents per cluster was 21—ranging from 6 to 59. Except for the structural characteristics data, all of the neighborhood-level measures were constructed by averaging subject responses within neighborhood clusters.³

3. Raudenbush and Sampson's (1999) "ecometric" analysis of neighborhood level measures derived from these data showed that 20 respondents per neighborhood was sufficient to produce acceptably high levels of inter-rater reliability (ranging from .70 to .90).

NEIGHBORHOOD STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Based on a large body of prior research and theory, we included three neighborhood structural characteristics in our analyses predicting neighborhood levels of informal social control. These characteristics were derived from a factor analysis (alpha scoring with oblique rotation) of 10 variables derived from the 1990 U.S. Census (for calculations, see Sampson et al., 1997; see also Land et al. 1990; Silver 2000). Concentrated disadvantage represents economic disadvantage in racially segregated urban neighborhoods. It includes the percentage of families below the poverty line, percentage of families receiving public assistance, percentage of unemployed individuals in the civilian labor force, percentage of female-headed families with children and percentage of residents who are black. Residential mobility is defined as the percentage of residents 5 years or older who lived in the same house 5 years earlier and the percentage of homes that are owner occupied. Concentrated immigration is defined to the percentage of Latino and foreign-born residents (70 percent of Latino residents in Chicago are Mexican). Using factor loadings as weights, we constructed summary scales to reflect the three underlying structural dimensions.⁴

HOMICIDE RATE

We also control for the homicide rate within each neighborhood cluster. Homicide is the most accurately recorded of all crimes (O'Brien, 1985) and tends to co-occur with other forms of physical and social disorder in the neighborhood (Skogan, 1990; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999; Anderson, 1990). Moreover, because the data for this study were gathered in 1995, and because informal social control has been shown to be a strong predictor of low crime rates (see above), we control for homicide rates gathered prior to 1995 in all of our analyses. Controlling for prior homicide rate minimizes the possibility that associations observed between the main predictor variables and informal social control are spurious due to the effects of violent crime in the neighborhood. Homicide data for this study come from the Chicago Police Department. The data consist of aggregate homicide counts geocoded to match the neighborhood clusters within which they occurred.

Following Morenoff et al. (2001), we used homicide counts for the years 1991 to 1993 to help reduce measurement error and stabilize the within-cluster rates. As a further precaution against measurement error, we added an empirical Bayes (EB) adjustment to each homicide count based

4. Summing the z-scores for the variables within each scale yielded the same results as those reported below.

on the population size of the neighborhood in which the homicides occurred. We did this by calculating predicted values from a Poisson regression equation of the homicide count data using population size as an exposure variable. This procedure adjusts each homicide count toward the mean count for all neighborhoods in proportion to the size of the population on which the count is based. Thus, homicide counts generated from neighborhoods with small population sizes (i.e., those for which measurement precision is low) were subject to a greater degree of adjustment toward the mean than counts based on larger population sizes (Morenoff et al., 2001).

SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL TIES

Neighborhood levels of social and organizational ties were measured using three scales previously examined by Morenoff et al. (2001), each based on information obtained from individual respondents aggregated to the neighborhood level. The local friendship/kinship ties scale is based on the average of two items capturing the number of friends and relatives respondents reported as living in the neighborhood (each measure was coded 0, 1-2, 3-5, 6-9, 10+). The local organizations scale is based on residents' perceptions of the number of organizations and programs in the neighborhood, such as a community newspaper, block group or tenant association, crime prevention program, alcohol or drug treatment program, mental health center or family health service. The voluntary associations scale captures the involvement of residents in local associations, including religious groups, neighborhood watch programs, resident associations, business or civic groups, ethnic or nationality clubs, and local political organizations. These measures cover the full range of systemic processes featured in prior ecological studies of crime (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997).

LEGAL CYNICISM

Following Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998), we measured legal cynicism using five items that capture residents' general beliefs about the legitimacy of law and social norms. Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

- "laws were made to be broken";
- "it's okay to do anything you want as long as you don't hurt anyone";
- "to make money there are no right and wrong ways anymore, only easy ways and hard ways";
- "fighting between friends or within families is nobody else's business"; and

- “nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.”

People who score high on this scale are less committed to conventional rules of behavior and thus may be less inclined to act informally to promote conventional behavior in the neighborhood. Scores on these items were averaged into a scale and aggregated to the neighborhood level.

NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT

We measured neighborhood attachment by taking the mean of two items tapping the degree to which residents view their neighborhood as a desirable place to live. The first item asked respondents “On the whole, do you like or dislike this neighborhood as a place to live?” The second item asked respondents to “suppose that for some reason you HAD to move away from this neighborhood. Would you miss the neighborhood very much, somewhat, not much or not at all?” The Pearson correlation between these two items was .51 ($p < .001$). These items are similar to those used in previous research to measure neighborhood attachment (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, 1988). Responses were averaged and aggregated to the neighborhood level.

SATISFACTION WITH POLICE

Following Sampson and Jeglum-Bartusch (1998), satisfaction with police was measured using the following five Likert-type items, each scored on a five-point scale of agreement-disagreement:

- “the police in this neighborhood are responsive to local issues”;
- “the police are doing a good job in dealing with problems that really concern people in this neighborhood”;
- “the police are not doing a good job in preventing crime in this neighborhood” (reverse coded);
- “the police do a good job in responding to people after they have been victims of crime;” and
- “the police are not able to maintain order on the streets and sidewalks in the neighborhood” (reverse coded).

This scale captures residents’ satisfaction with the ability of local police to control crime and maintain order in the neighborhood, to respond to victims of crime, and to deal with local problems that are important to residents. It does not include mistreatment of residents by police, however; nor does it incorporate media reports of police misconduct against citizens. Nonetheless, perceptions and experiences such as these may have contributed in part to residents’ responses to these scale items

(for a recent analysis of citizen’s perceptions of police misconduct, see Weitzer, 1999). Alpha for this scale was .78. Responses were averaged and aggregated to the neighborhood level.

A potential problem with this measure is that it may tap into residents’ perceptions of disorder within, and levels of attachment to, their neighborhood, in addition to their satisfaction with local police. In a recent large-scale observational study of police-citizen encounters, Reisig and Parks (2000) found that residents who rated their neighborhoods as favorable places to live expressed significantly higher levels of satisfaction with police than those who rated their neighborhoods as unfavorable places to live. Thus, variation across neighborhoods in satisfaction with police may be influenced by residents’ perceptions of the quality of life in the neighborhood. To handle this concern, our analysis of the relationship between satisfaction with police and neighborhood levels of informal social control are conducted with controls for structural disadvantage, violent crime rates and neighborhood attachment, all of which are known to be strongly related to residents’ perceptions of the quality of neighborhood life (Reisig and Parks, 2000; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL

Although informal social control may be applied across a range of situations and people, our measure focuses on informal social controls over youth. Our focus on the control of youth misbehavior is based on prior research showing that the prevalence of unsupervised teenage peer groups in a community is significantly associated with neighborhood rates of robbery and of violence by strangers (Sampson and Groves, 1989). According to Sampson and Groves (1989), communities that are unable to control youth deviance will not only experience higher rates of juvenile delinquency, but will also experience higher rates of adult crime. This is because public displays of deviance by youth serve as a sign of disorder, signaling to potential wrongdoers that neighborhood controls against crime are weak (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999; Skogan, 1990).

We measured informal social control using a four-item Likert scale. Residents were asked about the likelihood (on a five-point scale ranging from 1=very likely to 5=very unlikely) that their neighbors could be counted on to take action if:

- “children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner;”
- “children were spray painting graffiti on a local building;”
- “children were “showing disrespect to an adult;” or
- “if there was a fight in front of your house and someone was being beaten and threatened.”

Alpha for this scale was .82.⁵

STATISTICAL METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A major concern in neighborhood level studies such as this is that relationships measured at the neighborhood level may reflect compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of people they contain. More specifically, before we can make inferences about the relationships among neighborhood level variables, we must be certain that such relationships are not due to the fact that neighborhoods differ in the types of people they contain. For example, to the extent that low SES people tend to live in neighborhoods that have lower levels of satisfaction with police and lower levels of informal social control, failing to control for individual SES could lead to an overestimation of the relationship between satisfaction with police and informal social control at the neighborhood level.

To handle this problem, it is necessary to incorporate into the analysis respondent characteristics related to the selection of people into neighborhoods. Thus, the following respondent characteristics were included in the analysis: socioeconomic status (first principal component of education, income and occupational prestige), race/ethnicity (composed of 0/1 indicators for Hispanic and non-Hispanic blacks; non-Hispanic whites are the reference group), marital status (1 = married, 0 = single, separated, or divorced), mobility (number of residential moves in the past five years), sex (1 = male, 0 = female) and age (in years). Adjusting for these individual-level characteristics substantially reduces the likelihood that the macro-level relationships observed below are spuriously related to

5. This measure differs in one respect from the informal social control measure used by Sampson et al. (1997) in their measure of collective efficacy. Whereas their measure of informal social control included an item asking residents how likely their neighbors would be to organize against the closing of a local fire station, ours does not. We omitted this item because it did not reflect social control over youth deviance. Nonetheless, when we reanalyzed the data using the social control measure with the fire station item included, we obtained results identical to those reported below (available from lead author).

In addition, it should be noted that this measure of informal social control is based on respondents' perceptions of control behavior in their neighborhood rather than on control behavior itself. However, because we are primarily interested in aggregate-level associations with informal social control, and because these associations are derived from the perceptions of multiple respondents each of whom presumably has a somewhat different take on their neighbors' willingness to participate in informal social control, our measure is likely to correspond more closely with actual behavior in the neighborhood than would the perceptions of any particular survey respondent. Thus, we interpret this measure as a proxy for informal social control behavior in the neighborhood.

compositional differences in the characteristics of people across neighborhoods.

Because our approach is to simultaneously analyze data at both the neighborhood and individual levels within a regression framework, we must take into account the possibility that regression residuals within the neighborhood units may be correlated, thus violating the assumption of independent observations that underlies standard regression based techniques. To handle this problem, we used hierarchical linear models (HLM; Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992) to correct for the lack of independence among nested observations. This is done by separating the residual variance into two components: a residual variance at the individual-level and a residual variance that is constant across individuals within a neighborhood but random across neighborhoods. The standard errors produced by this approach allow for valid tests of statistical significance at both the neighborhood and individual levels (for computational details, see Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992).⁶

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The upper portion of Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the neighborhood level variables included in this study. As indicated, the neighborhood variables exhibited considerable variation. In addition, none exhibited skewness scores greater than 1.0, suggesting that they are approximately normally distributed (not shown). The lower portion of Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the individual level variables included in this study. As shown, 41 percent of respondents were male, the mean age was 42.6 years, 42 percent were black, 25 percent were Hispanic, 38 percent were married, and the average number of residential moves per respondent was 0.91 within the prior 5 years.

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

The first step in our analysis was to determine the proportion of variance in the outcome measure, informal social control, which existed between and within the 342 neighborhoods. For the null HLM model (the model with no covariates included), the between-neighborhood variance component was .134 ($p < .001$), indicating significant variation between neighborhoods in the amounts of informal social control exhibited. The variance component within neighborhoods was .949. This means that 12

6. Each of the individual-level covariates was grand mean centered prior to estimating the HLM equations.

percent of the variance in informal social control was between (as opposed to within) neighborhoods (.134/[.134+.949]).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Range
Neighborhood Level (n = 342)			
Concentrated disadvantage	0.00	1.00	-1.67 - 3.83
Residential mobility	0.00	1.00	-2.33 - 2.22
Immigrant concentration	0.00	1.00	-1.68 - 3.16
Logged EB homicide rate 1991-93	3.14	0.96	1.30 - 5.10
Local friendship and kinship ties	2.56	0.37	1.59 - 4.06
Voluntary associations	0.53	0.26	0.00 - 1.54
Local organizations	2.41	0.70	0.88 - 4.67
Neighborhood attachment	2.01	0.34	1.14 - 3.08
Anomie/Legal cynicism	2.49	0.13	2.21 - 2.91
Satisfaction with police	2.58	0.39	1.68 - 3.75
Person Level (n= 7,061)			
Male	0.41	0.49	0.00 - 1.00
Age	42.6	16.6	17.0 - 100.0
African American	0.42	0.49	0.00 - 1.00
Hispanic	0.25	0.43	0.00 - 1.00
Married	0.38	0.48	0.00 - 1.00
SES	0.02	1.32	-4.08 - 4.33
Residential moves in prior 5 years	0.91	1.24	0.00 - 5.00
Informal social control	3.41	1.04	1.00 - 5.00

To determine how much of this 12-percent variation was actually due to compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of people they contain, we added the person level control variables to the null model. Doing so reduced the between-neighborhood variance component to .099 ($p < .001$); the variance component within neighborhood clusters remained constant at .947. These analyses indicate that only 26 percent of the variance in informal social control that existed between neighborhoods in the null model was due to compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of people they contained ($[(.134-.099)/.134]$). Thus, a substantial proportion (76%) of the between-neighborhood variation in informal social control observed in these data results from residents' shared views of their neighbors' willingness to engage in informal social control, independent of their own individual characteristics.

Table 2 presents the results of our HLM analyses predicting neighborhood levels of informal social control. Although our main focus is on the neighborhood-level variables (presented in the upper portion of the table), all of the models shown in Table 2 include controls for person level characteristics.⁷ The analysis is presented in six models. Model 1 includes

7. Note that although HLM requires the dependent variable to be measured at the

Table 2. HLM Model Predicting Informal Social Control over Youth

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	3,440 (.017) ^{***}	3,441 (.016) ^{***}	3,440 (.017) ^{***}	3,440 (.015) ^{***}	3,440 (.015) ^{***}	3,440 (.015) ^{***}
Neighborhood Level (n = 342)						
Concentrated disadvantage	-.131 (.030) ^{***}	-.130 (.031) ^{***}	-.126 (.035) ^{**}	-.052 (.029) ^{**}	-.030 (.030)	-.037 (.033)
Residential mobility	-.115 (.018) ^{***}	-.110 (.019) ^{***}	-.115 (.018) ^{***}	-.112 (.016) ^{***}	-.111 (.016) ^{***}	-.104 (.018) ^{***}
Immigrant concentration	-.077 (.021) ^{***}	-.080 (.021) ^{***}	-.075 (.021) ^{***}	-.045 (.019) ^{**}	-.017 (.020)	-.026 (.021)
Logged EB homicide rate 1991-93	-.140 (.031) ^{***}	-.127 (.030) ^{**}	-.139 (.029) ^{**}	-.096 (.029) ^{**}	-.066 (.029) ^{**}	-.062 (.029) ^{**}
Local friendship and kinship ties	-	.066 (.019) ^{**}	-	-	-	.026 (.019)
Voluntary associations	-	.024 (.021)	-	-	-	.003 (.020)
Local organizations	-	.038 (.018)	-	-	-	.014 (.017)
Anomie/Legal cynicism	-	-	-	-	-	.037 (.025) ^{**}
Neighborhood attachment	-	-	-.009 (.027)	.183 (.022) ^{**}	-	.110 (.025) ^{**}
Satisfaction with Police	-	-	-	-	-	.158 (.028) ^{***}
Neighborhood variance explained ^a	58%	64%	58%	72%	73%	77%
Person Level (n= 7,061)						
Male	-.011 (.024)	-.011 (.024)	-.011 (.024)	-.012 (.024)	-.009 (.024)	-.012 (.024)
Age/10	.017 (.006)	.017 (.008)	.017 (.008)	.016 (.008)	.017 (.008)	.016 (.008)
African American	.006 (.043)	.027 (.044)	.027 (.044)	.033 (.043)	.044 (.044)	.051 (.044)
Hispanic	.064 (.039)	.073 (.039)	.064 (.039)	.066 (.039)	.097 (.039)	.093 (.039)
Married	-.002 (.026)	.003 (.025)	.002 (.026)	.005 (.025)	.001 (.025)	.005 (.025)
SES	.030 (.011) ^{***}	.029 (.011) ^{***}	.030 (.011) ^{***}	.026 (.010) ^{**}	.027 (.010) ^{**}	.026 (.010) ^{**}
Residential moves in prior 5 years	-.053 (.011) ^{***}	-.050 (.011) ^{***}	-.053 (.011) ^{***}	-.050 (.011) ^{***}	-.052 (.011) ^{***}	-.049 (.011) ^{***}

^aThe denominator for this calculation is the neighborhood level variance component, controlling for person level characteristics (.099)

person level (so that the effects of the person level covariates can be partialled out from those of the neighborhood level covariates), all of the neighborhood level coefficients produced by the model (shown in the upper portion of Table 2) refer to changes in the mean level of informal social across neighborhood clusters.

the neighborhood structural characteristics—concentrated disadvantage, residential mobility, immigrant concentration—and controls for homicide rate. Models 2 through 5 add each the hypothesized mediating factors to the equation one at a time. Model 6 includes all of the hypothesized factors together.

As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, each of the structural characteristics was significantly and independently related to neighborhood levels of informal social control. That is, neighborhoods that were disadvantaged, residentially unstable, had relatively large immigrant populations and had high violent crime rates tended to exhibit lower levels of informal social control. Model 1 explained 58 percent of the between-neighborhood variance in informal social control that remained after controlling for the person level characteristics. At the person level, age, SES and residential mobility were each related to respondents perceptions of informal social control in the neighborhood.

The remainder of Table 2 examines the effects of the four factors hypothesized to influence neighborhood levels of informal social control—social and organizational ties, legal cynicism, neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police. We begin with Model 2, which includes the social and organizational tie variables—local friendship and kinship ties, participation in voluntary associations and local organizations. Consistent with prior research (Morenoff et al., 2001), local friendship and kinship ties and local organizations were significantly and positively related to neighborhood levels of informal social control, suggesting that, independent of the structural context, social and organizational ties contribute to neighborhood levels of informal social control. However, participation in voluntary associations was not associated with increased levels of informal social control. Adding the social and organizational variables increased the between-neighborhood explained variance to 74 percent. However, comparing the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding the social and organizational variables (Models 1 and 2) shows little evidence of mediation. Social and organizational ties do not account for the lower levels of informal social control observed among structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Next we examine the effect of legal cynicism on neighborhood levels of informal social control. As shown in Model 3 of Table 2, legal cynicism was not related to neighborhood levels of informal social control, in contrast to our expectation. Thus, lack of moral investment in the legitimacy of conventional norms did not account for variation in the levels of informal social control across neighborhoods. Further, comparing the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding the legal cynicism variables (Models 1 and 3) indicates no evidence of mediation; nor did including this measure increase the amount of between

neighborhood variance explained by the model. Lack of moral investment in the legitimacy of conventional norms does not appear to account for the low levels of informal social control observed among structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Next we examine the effect of neighborhood attachment on neighborhood levels of informal social control. As shown in Model 4 of Table 2, neighborhood attachment was strongly and positively related to neighborhood levels of informal social control, controlling for structural disadvantage. Neighborhoods in which residents were generally satisfied with their surroundings exhibited higher levels of informal social control. To illustrate the magnitude of this relationship, we used Model 3 to calculate the predicted change in neighborhood levels of informal social control that result when neighborhood attachment is made to vary from two standard deviations below its mean to two standard deviations above. We found that neighborhood levels of informal social control increased from 3.08 to 3.81 under these conditions, a substantial increase equal to 1.7 standard deviation units.

In addition, a comparison of the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding the neighborhood attachment measure (Models 1 and 4) shows considerable evidence of mediation. Specifically, the coefficient for concentrated disadvantage was reduced by 60 percent (from $-.131$ to $-.052$) and rendered nonsignificant and the coefficient for immigrant concentration was reduced by 42 percent (from $-.077$ to $.045$) after adding neighborhood attachment to the equation. These results suggest that lack of attachment to the neighborhood is a key factor contributing to the low levels of informal social control observed in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. Adding neighborhood attachment to the equation increased the explained variance between neighborhoods to 72 percent.

Next we examine the effect of satisfaction with police on neighborhood levels of informal social control. As shown in Model 5 of Table 2, satisfaction with police was strongly and positively related to neighborhood levels of informal social control, controlling for structural disadvantage. Neighborhoods in which residents were satisfied with the services provided by police had higher levels of informal social control. To illustrate the magnitude of this relationship, we used Model 4 to calculate the predicted change in neighborhood levels of informal social control that result when satisfaction with police is made to vary from two standard deviations below its mean to two standard deviations above. We found that neighborhood levels of informal social control increased from 3.00 to 3.88 under these conditions, a substantial increase equal to 2 standard deviation units.

In addition, a comparison of the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding satisfaction with police to the equation (Models 1 and 5) shows considerable evidence of mediation. Specifically, the coefficient for concentrated disadvantage was reduced by 77 percent (from $-.131$ to $-.030$) and rendered nonsignificant and the coefficient for immigrant concentration was reduced by 78 percent (from $-.077$ to $-.017$) after adding satisfaction with police to the equation. These results suggest that lack of satisfaction with police is a key factor contributing to the low levels of informal social control observed in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. Adding satisfaction with police to the equation increased the explained variance between neighborhoods to 73 percent.

The final step in our analysis was to determine the net effect of each of the variables examined above by including all of them in the equation together. As shown in Model 6 of Table 2, only two of the hypothesized mediating mechanisms remained significant when they were all entered together. These were satisfaction with police and neighborhood attachment. Neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police were uniquely and positively associated with neighborhood levels of informal social control, independent of the effects of social and organizational ties, legal cynicism and the structural characteristics of the neighborhood including the homicide rate. Moreover, a comparison of the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding all of the hypothesized mediating mechanisms (Models 1 and 6) shows considerable evidence of mediation. Specifically, the coefficient for concentrated disadvantage was reduced by 72 percent (from $-.131$ to $-.037$) and the coefficient for immigrant concentration was reduced by 66 percent (from $-.077$ to $-.026$), after adding all of the hypothesized mediating mechanisms to the equation. The association between residential mobility and informal social control, however, remained relatively stable across models.

Adding all of the hypothesized mediators to the question increased the explained variance between neighborhood clusters to 77 percent. These results suggest that low levels of neighborhood attachment and lack of satisfaction with police are key factors contributing to low levels of informal social control in structural disadvantaged neighborhoods.⁸

DISCUSSION

Understanding the sources of informal social control in urban neighborhoods has long been a concern of sociologists working in the

social disorganization tradition. To date, however, no prior studies have empirically examined—in the same model—the contributions that social and organizational ties, legal cynicism, neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police make to informal social control. To fill this gap, the current study used data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)—a large-scale community survey—to examine the contribution of these factors to neighborhood levels of informal social control. Our purposes were to ascertain the unique contributions of each of these factors and to examine the extent to which they mediated the relationship between structural disadvantage—poverty, residential instability and immigrant concentration—and informal social control.

After adjusting for individual-level compositional effects and a range of ecological factors, we found that neighborhood attachment and satisfaction with police were significantly and positively associated with neighborhood levels of informal social control. These findings support the hypothesis that when residents are satisfied with their neighborhoods as places to live they feel a greater sense of responsibility for maintaining order within them and are therefore more willing to engage in informal social control. In contrast, when residents view the neighborhood as a community of limited liability (that they would leave at first opportunity), they are less willing to act in ways that promote social order. Thus, neighborhoods that engender feelings of attachment among residents have higher levels of informal social control. In light of this finding, future research should seek to identify the specific “use values” of neighborhoods (Logan and Molotch, 1987), such as schools, parks and proximity to local services that might help residents to develop a greater affective stake in the neighborhood.

Our findings also support the hypothesis that satisfaction with police is an important part of the cognitive landscape within which urban residents make decisions regarding their willingness to act on behalf of informal social control. Specifically, we found that when residents view the police as a viable and responsive local resource, they are more willing to intervene informally to prevent youth in the neighborhood from misbehaving. Importantly, this result held with controls for neighborhood attachment and legal cynicism. Thus, the relationship between satisfaction with police and informal social control cannot be attributed to spurious associations with the degree of attachment residents feel toward the neighborhood, nor can it be attributed to differences between neighborhoods in the extent to which residents are beholden to conventional norms.

As in virtually all studies based on cross-sectional data, a precise determination of the causal ordering among our measures was beyond our reach. Thus, we must remain cautious when considering the relationship

8. We obtained similar results when we included satisfaction with police and neighborhood attachment together in a separate HLM model, excluding social and organization ties and legal cynicism (results available from the authors).

observed here between neighborhood attachment and informal social control. Indeed, part of the reason why residents may report higher levels of attachment to their neighborhoods is that they perceive in their neighbors a commitment to act informally to control deviance in the neighborhood. To the extent that this is true, our estimate of the effect of neighborhood attachment on informal social control may be overstated. Thus, an important next step in the ecological study of neighborhood social control is to disentangle the potentially reciprocal relationship between these measures by examining whether changes in levels of neighborhood attachment predict changes in neighborhood levels of informal social control over time.

Fortunately, the problem of reciprocal causation is of less concern when considering the effect of satisfaction with police on informal social control. Unlike neighborhood attachment, residents are less likely to base their perceptions of local police on their neighbors' social control behaviors. Of greater concern is that residents will attribute to the police positive feelings they hold toward their neighborhoods in general. Indeed, prior research shows that neighborhood attachment is highly correlated with positive feelings toward the police (Reisig and Parks, 2000). Therefore, it is important to highlight that we observed a strong positive relationship between satisfaction with police and informal social control holding constant structural disadvantage, the homicide rate and neighborhood attachment. These controls substantially reduce the likelihood that the relationship between satisfaction with police and informal social control observed in this study is due to spurious associations with residents' perceptions of the quality of neighborhood life. Nonetheless, an important next step in understanding the social sources of informal social control in urban neighborhoods is to examine these associations using longitudinal measures gathered at the neighborhood level that take into account factors likely to influence residents' perceptions of the quality of neighborhood life over time, such as changes in social and physical disorder, police responsiveness, the vitality of local social and organizational networks, and attitudes toward the law more generally.

Assuming there is truth to our finding that satisfaction with police contributes to informal social control, what can the police do to influence neighborhood levels of informal social control? One answer that flows from our analysis is that efforts by police to control crime and maintain order in the neighborhood, to respond to victims of crime, and to deal with local problems that are important to residents may go a long way toward stimulating residents to act in ways that promote social control in the neighborhood. In addition, policing scholars suggest that satisfaction with the police depends not only on crime control efforts engaged in by police,

but also on the extent to which positive interactions occur between police and community members (Skogan, 1990; Tyler, 1990; Grinc, 1994; Mearns and Kahan, 1998; Weitzer and Tuch, 2002). Accordingly, higher levels of satisfaction with police are likely to occur when police agencies communicate with citizens, become aware of locally defined problems and act in ways that are responsive to those problems.⁹

Moreover, policing scholars have found that satisfaction with police is strongly related to perceptions of social order in the neighborhood—littering, graffiti, vandalism, public drinking, for example (Reisig and Parks, 2000). That is, residents of neighborhoods in which visible signs of disorder are common appear to hold police accountable for not acting to prevent them. Community theorists, however, suggest that social order results primarily from informal social control practices engaged in by residents rather than from formal control practices of the police (Grinc, 1994; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Perhaps our findings offer a way to reconcile these divergent views: in addition to focusing resources on attempting to directly reduce levels of disorder in a neighborhood (through zero-tolerance policies), it may be fruitful for police to adopt policies and practices aimed at persuading residents of their commitment to working with them to address local problems and concerns, thereby creating a neighborhood atmosphere in which residents are more willing to exercise informal social control on their own.

A second key purpose of this study was to understand why informal social control is less prevalent in structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. In this regard, we found that a substantial proportion of the relationship between neighborhood structure and informal social control was accounted for when satisfaction with police and neighborhood attachment were introduced to the model. These results indicate that two important reasons why structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods exhibit lower levels of informal social control are that residents of these neighborhoods tend to have less confidence in the ability of local police to be responsive to local needs and that residents of these neighborhoods are

9. It is worth noting that a city-wide community policing program, known as the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), was implemented in Chicago during the time that the PHDCN survey was administered (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). The purpose of the program was to promote greater police-community integration, including the kinds of responsiveness to local needs suggested by community policing scholars. However, the CAPS program did not become a district wide program until the fall of 1994 and was, therefore, still in its start-up phases during the time of the PHDCN survey. Thus, it is unlikely that the program exerted a substantial influence on the results of this study. It remains for future research to determine whether such programs can effectively increase neighborhood levels of satisfaction with police.

less committed to their neighborhoods as places to live. These results were in sharp contrast to the lack of mediation observed when social and organizational ties—local friendship/kinship ties, participation in voluntary associations and local organizations—and legal cynicism were introduced to the model (Table 2, Model 2). Contrary to our expectations, legal cynicism and social and organizational ties did not help to explain the relationship between structural disadvantage and neighborhood levels of informal social control.

The lack of association between legal cynicism and informal social control observed here may appear to raise questions regarding the role of legal cynicism in explaining between-neighborhood variation in informal social control. However, before rejecting legal cynicism (and related concepts such as anomie and cultural attenuation) as a source of informal social control in urban neighborhoods, it is important to point out that the measure of legal cynicism used here differed in one important respect from the conceptualizations of anomie and cultural attenuation put forth by Merton (1964) and Warner (2003).

Specifically, Warner (2003:83) argues that cultural strength is best measured by the extent to which residents perceive their neighbors to strongly agree with conventional values and not by the extent to which residents themselves adhere to such values. According to Warner (2003), when residents do not perceive their neighbors to hold conventional values, they become less inclined to enforce such values themselves. Similarly, Merton (1964:226) described anomie as a social contextual condition in which “there is no longer a widely shared sense. . . of what may be legitimately expected of people in the course of social action.” In contrast to these conceptualizations that emphasize perceptions of cultural strength among people in one’s environment, our measure of legal cynicism captured only the extent to which residents themselves agreed with conventional values. Thus, the lack of association between legal cynicism and informal social control observed here cannot be taken as evidence that anomie and cultural attenuation are unimportant sources of control. To address this issue, future studies must more carefully distinguish between the effects of respondents’ own beliefs in conventional values and the extent to which they perceive their neighbors to believe in such values.

The lack of association between social and organizational ties and informal social control observed here is consistent with recent evidence suggesting that strong social ties may not be as critical for fostering informal social control as once thought (Wilson, 1996; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson et al., 1999; Morenoff et al., 2001; Bellair, 1997). According to Wilson, many impoverished and dangerous neighborhoods have a relatively high degree of social integration, yet residents often feel that

they have little control over their immediate environment, including the environment’s negative influence on children. In such areas, social interaction among neighbors tends to be confined to those whose skills, styles, orientations and habits are not as conducive to promoting positive social outcomes, such as academic and professional success and family stability, as are those in neighborhoods with more social and economic resources (Wilson, 1996; see also Morenoff et al., 2001).

However, before dismissing social and organizational ties as sources of informal social control in urban neighborhoods it is important to point out that the measures of social and organizational ties used here did not capture the degree to which private, parochial and public institutions intersect to produce informal social control in neighborhoods. As Carr (2003) observes, sociohistorical changes in the time use patterns of families no longer support the traditional notions of private and parochial forms of informal social control described by Hunter (1985). Specifically, Carr notes that “more two-parent families now have both parents working and putting in longer hours on the job, and for many there is simply not enough time to collectively supervise and socialize neighborhood youth” (Carr, 2003:1276). This has created a situation in which “the usual patterns of informal social control, supervision and intervention, have been supplanted and replaced by a set of more structured and formalized practices,” which Carr refers to as “the new parochialism.”

Thus, it may be that for private and parochial social ties to translate into informal social control in today’s urban neighborhoods they must be partnered with public institutions, such as police and political organizations, in order to access institutional resources from outside the neighborhood (see also Velez, 2001; Bursik and Gasmick, 1993). Failure to measure these cross-level linkages may lead to an underestimation of the importance of social ties in producing informal social control. Thus, future research on the role that social and organization ties play in the production of informal social control must seek not only to measure social participation at the various levels—private, parochial and public—but must also seek to measure the interrelationships among them.

CONCLUSION

We found that informal social control had more to do with shared perceptions of the quality of neighborhood life and local policing than with active involvement in local social networks and the strength of conventional values. Based on these results, and pending corroboration with longitudinal data, this study suggests that efforts to increase informal social control in urban neighborhoods should focus on improving police-

community relations and local conditions that would lead residents to develop stronger attachments to their neighborhoods.

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