Denaturalizing disaster: A social autopsy of the 1995 Chicago heat wave

ERIC KLINENBERG
University of California, Berkeley

> It's hot. It's very hot. We all have our little problems but let's not blow it out of proportion.... We go to extremes in Chicago. And that's why people like Chicago. We go to extremes.
>
> Chicago Mayor, Richard M. Daley

> During my residence in England, at least twenty or thirty persons have died of simple starvation under the most revolting circumstances, and a jury has rarely been found possessed of the courage to speak the truth in the matter.... The bourgeoisie dare not speak the truth in these cases, for it would speak its own condemnation.... The English working men call this social murder, and accuse our whole society of perpetrating this crime perpetually.
>
> Frederick Engels,
> *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

On June 30, 1995, the front page of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, a journal of the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, featured a report attributing 5,379 American deaths in the thirteen years between 1979 and 1992 to excessive heat. Deaths from the heat, the journal concluded, "are readily preventable." Public health experts know the risk factors associated with heat related illness and mortality as well as the procedures responsible parties can take to reduce them. The report lists this information and advises local officials to use it when conditions warrant intervention.[1]

Less than two weeks later an unusual weather system hit Chicago with one of the most severe heat waves in its recorded history. Temperatures

Theory and Society **28**: 239–295, 1999.

reached 106 degrees; the heat index, or experienced heat, climbed to 120 degrees; uncommonly "high lows" (daily low temperatures that were themselves dangerously high), sparse cloud cover, and a dearth of cooling winds kept the city broiling, without relief, for a full week.[2] Although baseline temperatures were slightly less hot than some of Chicago's heat waves from earlier summers, the combination of these climatic conditions posed a serious threat to the health of the metropolitan community.

Chicago was totally unprepared for this attack of the elements. The heat turned deadly on July 13, and local media stepped up their coverage of the morbid outcome the next day, when two toddlers suffocated after the director of their day care center inadvertently left them locked inside her truck for hours at a temperature of 190 degrees. These deaths initiated a week of suffering so massive that many residents and city officials refused to comprehend or accept that it had happened. By the end of the week, though, few could deny that the city had witnessed a disaster of historical proportion: medical examiners confirmed that over five-hundred Chicagoans had died directly from the heat, public health workers reported over seven-hundred deaths in excess of the weekly average,[3] and hospitals registered thousands of visits for weather-related problems.

What no one has established, however, is that the processes through which Chicagoans lost their lives followed the entrenched logic of social and spatial division that governs the metropolis.[4] Journalistically constructed and conventionally remembered as the city's most deadly natural disaster, the destructive 1995 heat wave was, in fact, a sign and symptom of the new and dangerous forms of marginality and neglect endemic to contemporary American big cities and notably severe in Chicago, a structurally determined catastrophe for which sociological analysis illuminates not simply the obvious relationship between poverty and suffering, but some of the institutional and social mechanisms upon which extreme forms of American insecurity are built. The Chicago disaster reveals several forms of precariousness as of yet unmentioned or under-developed in the emerging debate on the new urban poverty,[5] including the literal social isolation of poor seniors, particularly in the city's most violent areas; the degradation of and rising conflict in urban hotel residences, which constitute a large but generally unmentioned sector of the low-income housing market; the changes in public service delivery and the threats to public health stemming from privatization and other radical shifts in local government administration;

and the new social morphological conditions of neighborhoods abandoned by businesses as well as the state and depopulated by residents.[6]

The unprecedentedly high mortality figures in the 1995 heat wave substantiate the dangers of current urban conditions: the excess deaths per 100,000 city residents were greater in July, 1995 than in the notable heat waves of 1955, 1983, 1986, and 1988, and only the 1955 heat wave came close to a mortality rate as much as half that of 1995. After nearly thirty years without a significant heat disaster, the series of deadly heat waves that begins in the early 1980s suggests that there is a connection among state retrenchment, rising fear of violence, and vulnerability. The climatic conditions in 1995 were more dangerous than they had been in earlier heat waves, but the 1995 disaster would not have been so deadly unless the conditions of the city's most precarious residents were more dangerous as well. In fact, *scientific studies show that the differences in the mortality rates between the 1995 and earlier heat waves are not natural; that is, they are not attributable to the weather.* Chicago's own Department of Public Health researchers concede that their most sophisticated comparative climatic analyses "have failed to detect relationships between the weather and mortality that would explain what happened in July," and suggest that sociological investigation is necessary to understand the event.[7] Some features of the sociospatial and political structure of Chicago explain the unprecedented death toll, but thus far no social scientific studies have attempted to find them.

From the moment it hit the city, the heat wave has been explained and reconstructed primarily by journalists and public officials, with both groups doing more to naturalize the disaster than to expose its social and political dimensions. Immediately after the heat wave, Mayor Richard M. Daley, then busy with efforts to improve the city's image and revitalize its commercial core before the following summer's Democratic National Convention, appointed "an 18-person commission to study the epidemiological, meteorological and sociological aspects of the heat wave."[8] While the commission included several of the city's leading public health leaders, a gerontologist, medical doctors, and a meteorologist, there were no sociologists in the group, no one trained to make the sociological conclusions that appear everywhere in the final report.[9] The Mayor's Commission on Extreme Weather Conditions, the city's most formal official statement on the disaster, silences sociologists but articulates several sociological observations – an act considerably ironic given the presence in the city of the University of Chicago Department of Sociology, the birthplace of American

urban sociology. Excluding sociologists made it easier for the city government to construct and sustain a depoliticized explanation of the heat wave deaths; and the small number of other scientific studies on the week have done little to show the social structure of the heat wave deaths or to contest the city's official interpretation.[10]

Grounded in combination of field work, interviews, statistical data, cartographical analysis, and historical studies of Chicago,[11] this sociological account of the heat wave shows how the climate, the living conditions of the city's most precarious residents, and the local government, the organization most responsible for protecting the welfare of citizens, interact to determine the level of danger and damage that a disaster such as the heat wave inflicts. In 1995, the city's climatic, sociospatial, and political conditions were all extreme: not only was the weather unprecedentedly severe, in addition the advancing state of poverty and the inadequacy of the state's response created an unusually deadly crisis.[12] The social conditions that both organized and naturalized this deadly disaster are complex, but disaster literature, urban sociology, media studies, and environmental justice research – the four fields of social science most directly applicable to the event – offer little theory that adequately explains either the heat wave deaths or the symbolic construction of them. The social science of disasters is particularly weak on this account, as it has largely focused on the consequences rather than the determinants of disasters.[13]

Through this analysis of the heat wave I offer a loose model for sociologizing, and thereby denaturalizing, disasters that are generally constructed according to categories of common sense and classified in a vocabulary that effaces their social logic. This framework suggests a novel approach for using environmental events as revealers of social conditions that are less visible but nonetheless present in everyday life. The model brings to the center three social conditions and processes that are largely peripheral to or absent from both popular and scientific analyses of disasters: First, *the social morphology and political economy of vulnerability* that determines disaster damage;[14] second, *the role of the state in determining this vulnerability* at both structural and conjunctural levels; and third, *the tendencies of journalists and political officials to render invisible both the political economy of vulnerability and the role of the state* in the reconstructions of the disasters they produce, reconstructions that not only dominate the public representations of the events but help organize the terms of scientific studies as well.

Theorizing disasters

This analysis of the heat wave, as well as the model for analyzing disasters around which it is built, is grounded in three established traditions and one embryonic body of social theory, all of which it engages and develops for the study of environmental events. Its first legacy lies in Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss's project to establish the social foundations of behavior, such as suicide, or categories, such as the person, commonly considered to be individually determined or natural.[15] In chapter three of *Suicide*, "Suicide and Cosmic Factors," Durkheim argues that variations in collective life – and not, as expert opinion posited, the heat – explain the relatively high rates of suicides in summer that scientists found in every country they studied. Marcel Mauss develops this theme in *Seasonal Variation of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology*, where he shows that embedded forms of social organization – and not the weather – account for the vast difference in seasonal social practices of the Eskimo.[16] This analysis of the heat wave pushes Durkheim's argument even farther, showing that the heat fails even to explain deaths officially attributed to the weather.

The model is also indebted to a methodological principle of the Durkheimian school: the notion that, as Marcel Mauss claimed, extreme events are marked by "an excessiveness which allows us better to perceive the facts than in those places where, although no less essential, they still remain small-scale and involuted."[17] There is an interesting variation on this position in the literature of the second tradition of social theory that informs this analysis of disaster, urban ecology, ranging from the early Chicago school to the new urban sociology or political economy approach. In his classic essay, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment," Robert Park urbanizes Durkheim's methodological technique, arguing that the city is itself an extreme case that facilitates social research. "A great city," Park claims, "tends to ... lay bare to the public view in a massive manner all the human characters and traits which are ordinarily obscured and suppressed in smaller communities."[18]

But the significance of urban sociology in this study extends beyond this methodological point. The marks of both the first and second waves of the Chicago School are evident throughout my analysis of the heat wave: the case study approach; the integration of field work, interviews, mapping, history, and statistical analysis; the emphasis on physical and social space; the focus on community and public life; and

the investigation of ethnoracial differentiation – all at the heart of the Chicago school – are central to this project.[19] Although it is methodologically suggestive, the Chicago school's theoretical system and empirical record are insufficient to explain the structure of the heat wave mortality, and its biotic vocabulary for classifying urban life could only reinforce the naturalization of the disaster. In this study, I go to the living laboratory of the Chicago school to show that its ecological approach to urbanism is insufficient to explain an ecological disaster in Chicago itself. Only by combining the new urban sociology, which highlights the importance of political and economic power in the sociospatial organization of the metropolis, with elements of the Chicago School approach is it possible to account for the geography of urban vulnerability.[20]

The third tradition of sociology at the heart of this model is the project of making visible violence that is otherwise misrecognized, of exposing the political economy of symbolic violence and thereby opening new spaces for analytical and political work. This project is most systematically pursued in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who has empirically shown the obscured machinations of power in such diverse areas as the world of art, the educational system, and the architecture of the home. In his recent work, Bourdieu has focused on two key sites in the production of symbolic domination, both of which are central to the disaster model: the state and the journalistic field. In the early 1990s, when he was developing his work on the political field, Bourdieu argued that state has a unique "power to constitute and to impose as universal and universally applicable ... within the boundaries of a given territory, a common set of coercive norms" and categories.[21] Pushing Weber's famous formulation, Bourdieu claimed that the state is not merely the holder of a monopoly on legitimate physical violence, but over legitimate symbolic violence as well. To trace this violence, Bourdieu departed from most political sociologists by examining the effects of the state outside of formal political institutions and organizations, in the places where it is least recognized but perhaps most potent.[22] Although they seem unlikely subjects for political sociology, naturalized disasters represent a promising domain for locating the work of the state.

Bourdieu has also recognized that the media now share the role of legitimating symbolic violence with the state. In a number of sociological studies of the journalistic field, he and his colleagues have begun to map out the ways in which the media, increasingly dominated

by commercial enterprises and organized according to the principles of marketing, imposes its set of understandings and frames for defining social events into the mental structures of social actors, including social scientists.[23] These studies provide a theoretical basis for reorienting the analysis of disasters toward the process of their symbolic construction and the politics of hiding their sociological dimensions, and in turn the disaster model expands the scope of this research.

The final type of theory with which the disaster model engages is the rapidly developing social science of the environment. In its effort to broaden the scope of social research and contemporary politics by redefining nature and highlighting environmental inequality as an important but under-analyzed form of domination, environmental justice research has established new ways of conceiving both modernization and the forms of modern social division.[24] According to most environmental justice research, environmental dangers such as proximity to hazardous waste storage facilities and polluting industries, unsafe water sources, and unsanitary residential conditions are largely distributed according to the class, ethnoracial status, and political power of communities.[25] In their attempts to denaturalize nature, environmental justice scholars have noted the possibility of treating catastrophes as social events, but they have not yet developed a set of principles for doing this work or a major study of a specific disaster.[26] Most disaster literature has also failed to integrate the new environmental science into its perspective. In the heat wave, however, dangers specific to the most neglected urban environments contributed to the organization of disaster deaths. The mortality patterns of the disaster, it was clear, reflected the inequalities of the city's built environment, leaving environmental justice scholars with a problematic for theoretical expansion that is central to their project.

The study of the heat wave engages several important bodies of social theory, but building a model for studying disaster based on vulnerability, the state, and the symbolic construction of the event is more than an academic task. Putatively environmental urban disasters will likely increase in the future because two processes at the heart of current economic and social development are also directly linked to the structure of disaster vulnerability. First, retrenchment of the welfare state, which is not merely an empirically observable trend in advanced societies but also a mandate of major international development organizations, means that governments will likely be less and less able and willing to protect their more precarious residents. Second, advanced

forms of marginality, such as neighborhood and community degradation, housing crises, and health deterioration, are themselves advancing; that is, the rise in endangered urban populations is not a completed historical change but a process whose effects lie ahead of us.[27] As it develops, more urban dwellers become vulnerable to the external hazards, such as environmental events, that they once might have been able to survive. Global warming, if it is indeed occurring, makes these two processes all the more dangerous because it raises not only the temperature of the earth but also the number of extreme weather systems, including heat waves, blizzards, and other potentially deadly storms. As these processes continue and interact the project of developing *social autopsies* for disasters grows politically and scientifically more relevant. This examination of the 1995 Chicago heat wave, as well as the model of analysis it establishes, is therefore motivated by the notion, heretofore the guiding principle of forensic science, that by studying death we gain capacity to understand life as well as to protect it.[28]

Urban onslaught: The mounting spectacle of death in the city

Return to Chicago: Tuesday, July 12; sunny and still; temperature near 100°, heat index 102°, the streets ablaze; the air sticky, almost thick enough to chew. The heat came *announced.* Forecasters, watching the warm air rising from the South, predicted a hot spell several days before Chicago cracked 90°, and local television news broadcasts warned of an imminent "summer sizzler" through the night of July 11. According to Kathryn D. Sullivan, the former head of the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration and leader of a survey team investigating the heat wave deaths, "the National Weather Service issued warnings of the developing heat several days in advance"[29] – enough time, argued Dr. Carol Rubin, who directed a study of the heat wave for the Centers for Disease Control, "to disseminate prevention messages to the public."[80] Some Chicagoans were prepared, others acted quickly to protect themselves. Stores carrying air conditioners and fans sold out their supplies by the afternoon, leaving teams of eager shoppers on long, fruitless searches for home cooling systems. City dwellers swarmed the beaches: 90,000 crammed a modestly sized downtown beach alone. Those far from the lakefront sought park water fountains, public pools, or, if none of these was accessible, open fire hydrants to get them through the day.

But Chicagoans needed air conditioning to survive such extreme heat, and as the city got its fix on artificial cooling its demand for electricity reached an all-time high, totally overwhelming the normal capacity of Chicago's utilities provider, Commonwealth Edison (Com Ed). Com Ed was not adequately prepared for this soaring use of power and its equipment broke down precisely when its customers most needed energy. Com Ed's generators began failing on Wednesday and continued to malfunction through the weekend. Friday, after the three consecutive days of record-breaking energy consumption and a sweeping series of power failures around the city, two large circuit breakers went out at the Northwest station within an hour. Disarray at the utility company left some communities without electricity – and therefore without air conditioning, fans, elevators, refrigeration, and television and radio (where Chicagoans could tune in to broadcasts about the heat and instructions on how to stay safe) – for two days or more, and the temperature never moderated.

Thursday the thirteenth was Chicago's most uncomfortable day. Some regions of the city reported temperatures of 106° and heat indices as high as 126°; indoor temperatures in high-rise apartment buildings without air conditioning topped 115° even when windows were open; and school buses, trapped in mid-day traffic while carrying children on summer field trips, grew so hot that dozens of young campers, weak and nauseous from heat exhaustion, had to be pulled out of the stuffy vehicles and hosed down by fire department workers to prevent them from passing out. Massive water treatments were a survival technique the emergency workers might have borrowed from inhabitants, especially the young, of the poorest and most underserved areas of the city. These Chicagoans, the most likely to lack access to cool spaces, had no choice but to open their neighborhood fire hydrants, creating public fountains and turning the streets into waterparks, oases where the able-bodied could transform deadly conditions into spaces for frolic and relief.

But this popular survival strategy among disadvantaged urban dwellers otherwise trapped in the heat has a dangerous unintended effect: massive use of fire hydrants as cooling devices depletes local water supplies – enough, in extreme cases, to leave entire communities without running water for extended periods. On Thursday, the hottest day in city history, Chicagoans opened over three-thousand fire hydrants, consuming so much water that several neighborhoods lost almost all of their pressure for hours or more. Television news reported that the city

was fighting a "water war": over one-hundred crews circulated through Chicago to close the hydrants and police threatened anyone caught tampering with emergency water sources with a $500 fine, but people in the streets persisted, using acetylene torches, sledgehammers, power drills, and saws to generate a flow of water. Threatened with the possibility of losing their best source of relief from the heat, groups of youths "showered nine water department trucks with gunfire, bricks or rocks ... and caused minor injuries to four workers" who tried to seal the hydrants.[31] This violent struggle for such a basic resource was truly tragic, for these deprived communities would lose no matter what the final result. If sealing the hydrants would have helped overheated residents regain water pressure, it also would have meant submitting to the more dangerous pressures imposed by the limited resources of the neighborhood and the intensity of the heat.

By Friday the environmental onslaught began to overcome the meager forms of resistance mounted by the city's most susceptible residents. Extreme heat, medical research has established, breaks down bodily defenses after at least forty-eight hours of uninterrupted exposure, and on the third consecutive day of 100°-plus apparent temperatures the collapsing public health was great enough to cripple much of the city's system of emergency medical care and post-mortem examination. The numbers are startling. The baseline death rate in Chicago during July is roughly 72 per day, and there is usually little variance in this rate. On Friday, however, 188 Chicagoans died, with so many of the corpses requiring autopsy that the Chief Medical Examiner's office had to make special arrangements to handle the intake. The day was a harbinger of what would come when the lag effects of earlier heat took their course and the temperatures failed to drop below the 90°s. Saturday was massively deadly: 365, or 293 over the norm, died in one day; Sunday, with 241 mortalities, was almost as bad; Monday the rate had dropped, but only to 193; Tuesday it hovered 34 above the norm, at 106; and for the next two days it remained 20 above average (see Figures 1 and 2).

This profusion of death overwhelmed the morgue, where on average medical examiners see 17 bodies a day and storage facilities as well as staffing levels are designed to accommodate this load. A serene modern building several blocks west of the downtown Loop and across the street from the city's largest public hospital, the morgue became the symbolic center of Chicago's crisis as the number of corpses delivered there exceeded its holding capacity by hundreds and a large brigade of

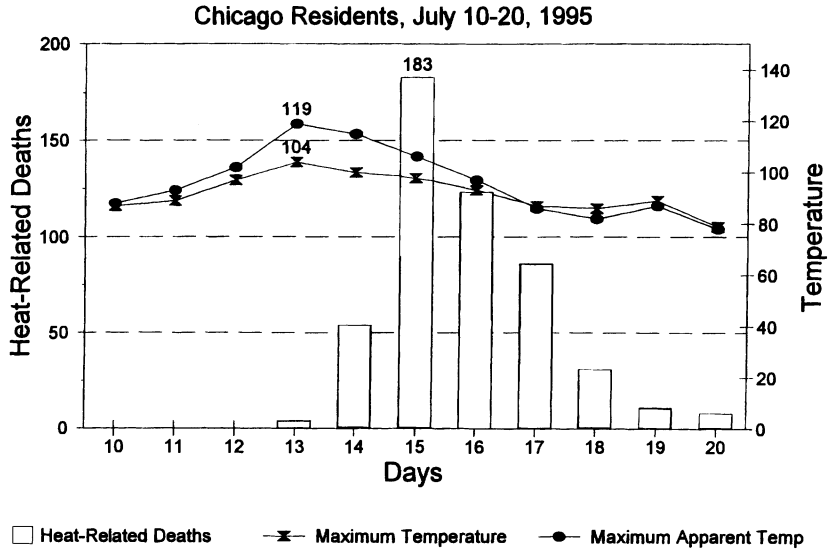

Figure 1. Heat-related deaths and temperature.
[Source: Steven Whitman, Chicago Department of Health.]

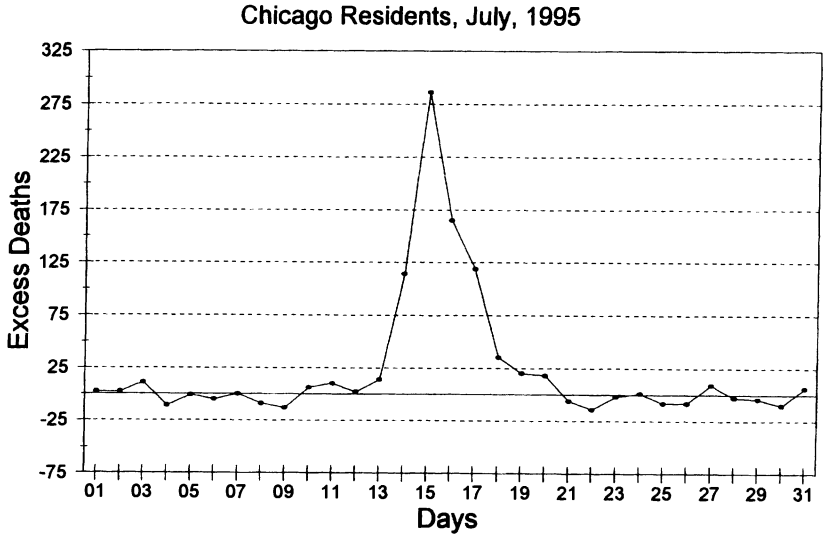

Figure 2. Estimated excess mortality.
[Source: Steven Whitman, Chicago Department of Health.]

journalists, health workers, and city officials rushed to the area to attend to the spectacle. Recognizing that the soaring death toll could bring chaos to his office, Dr. Edmund Donoghue, the county's Chief Medical Examiner, made emergency arrangements to handle the excess bodies.

Donoghue assembled forensic and public health workers to assist his staff on marathon shifts, but what made the scene in the city of Upton Sinclair's dystopic vision most unusual, indeed fantastical was the fleet of 48 foot-long refrigerated meat-packing trucks, volunteered by a civic-minded owner of a local trucking company, brought in to hold the bodies as medical workers raced to complete their autopsies. The company delivered a few trucks on Friday when the death count first jumped, but these filled so quickly that his crew had to return with several more the next day. At the height of the heat wave's destructiveness ten large trucks, along with a traffic jam of ambulances, police wagons, and fire department vehicles used to deliver bodies from around the city, television and radio vans, and health workers' cars crammed the area surrounding the morgue, forming a parade of death so enormous, so surreal, that it seemed impossible to believe that this was happening in the center of the city.

Locating the symptoms: An anatomy of urban suffering

During the heat wave, geography was linked to destiny. The processes that killed so many city residents were concentrated around the low-income, elderly, African-American, and more violent regions of the metropolis, the neighborhoods of exclusion in which the most vulnerable Chicagoans make their homes. Similarities between maps of the heat wave's deaths and maps of ethnoracial and class division reveal the social and structural underpinnings of the event. Figure 3, the map of the Chicago community areas with the highest death rates, shows that the community areas[32] hit hardest by the heat wave lie on the south and southwest sides of the city, historically the homes of the city's African-American community and a diverse group of workers long involved in the industrial economy.[33] This map is particularly striking because it illustrates a ring of high-death areas, beginning at Burnside in the south and continuing north through Uptown and Edgewater, circling but not extending into the Loop, the Near North Side, Lincoln Park, and Lake View – four areas that house some of the most privileged communities in the city. Read against the history of

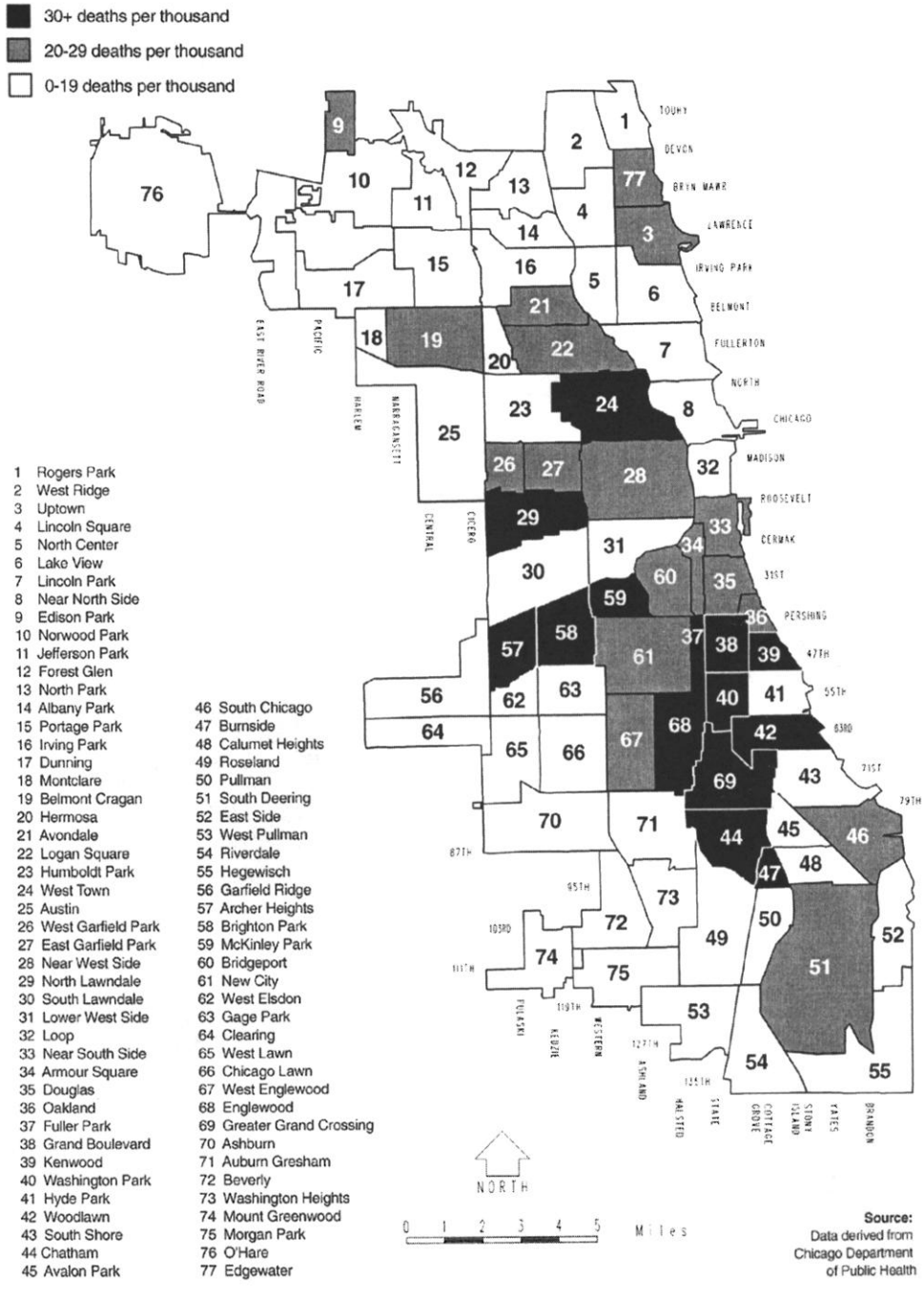

Figure 3. Chicago community areas with highest heat-related death rates.

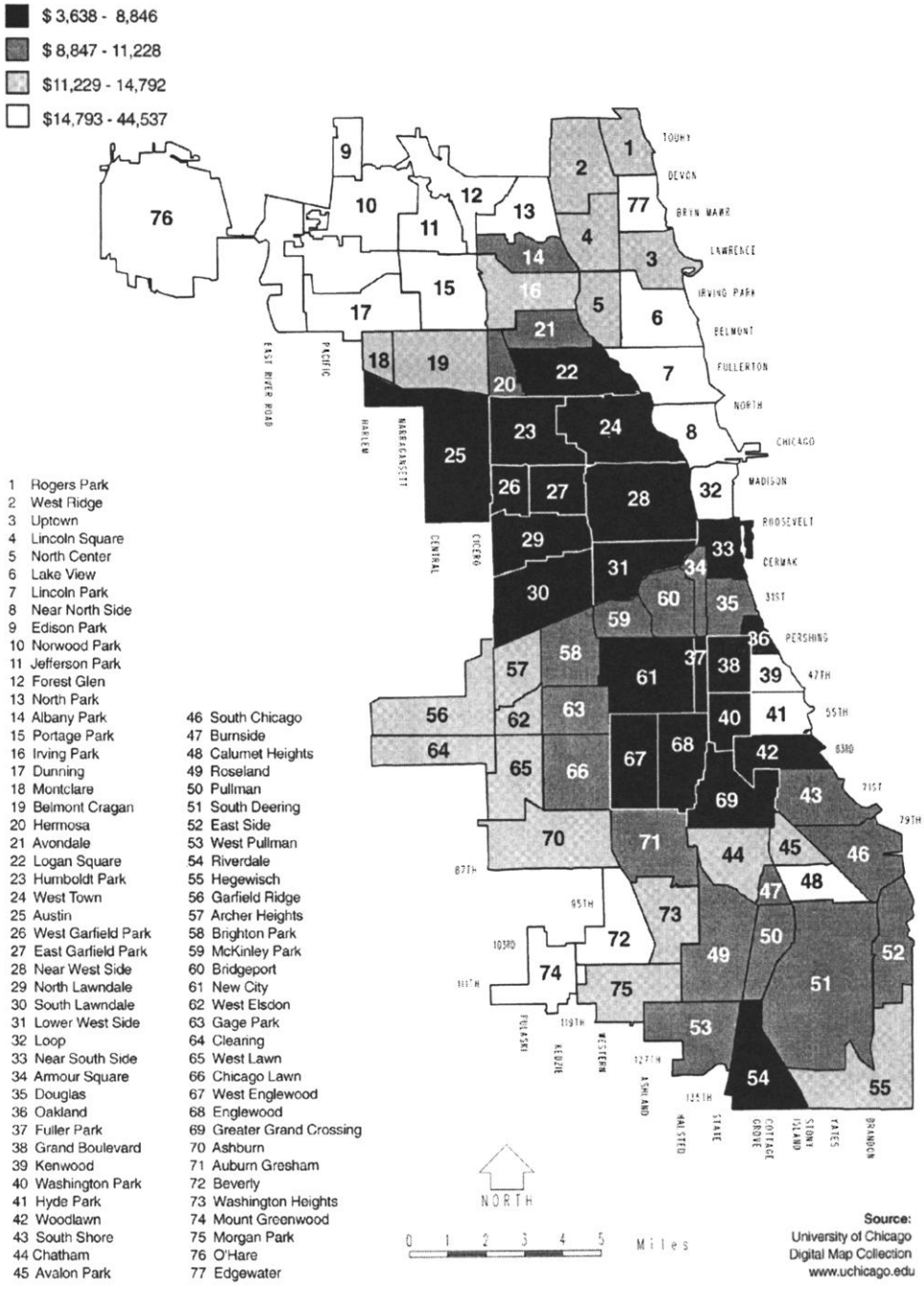

Figure 4. Chicago community areas per capita income, quartiles, 1989.

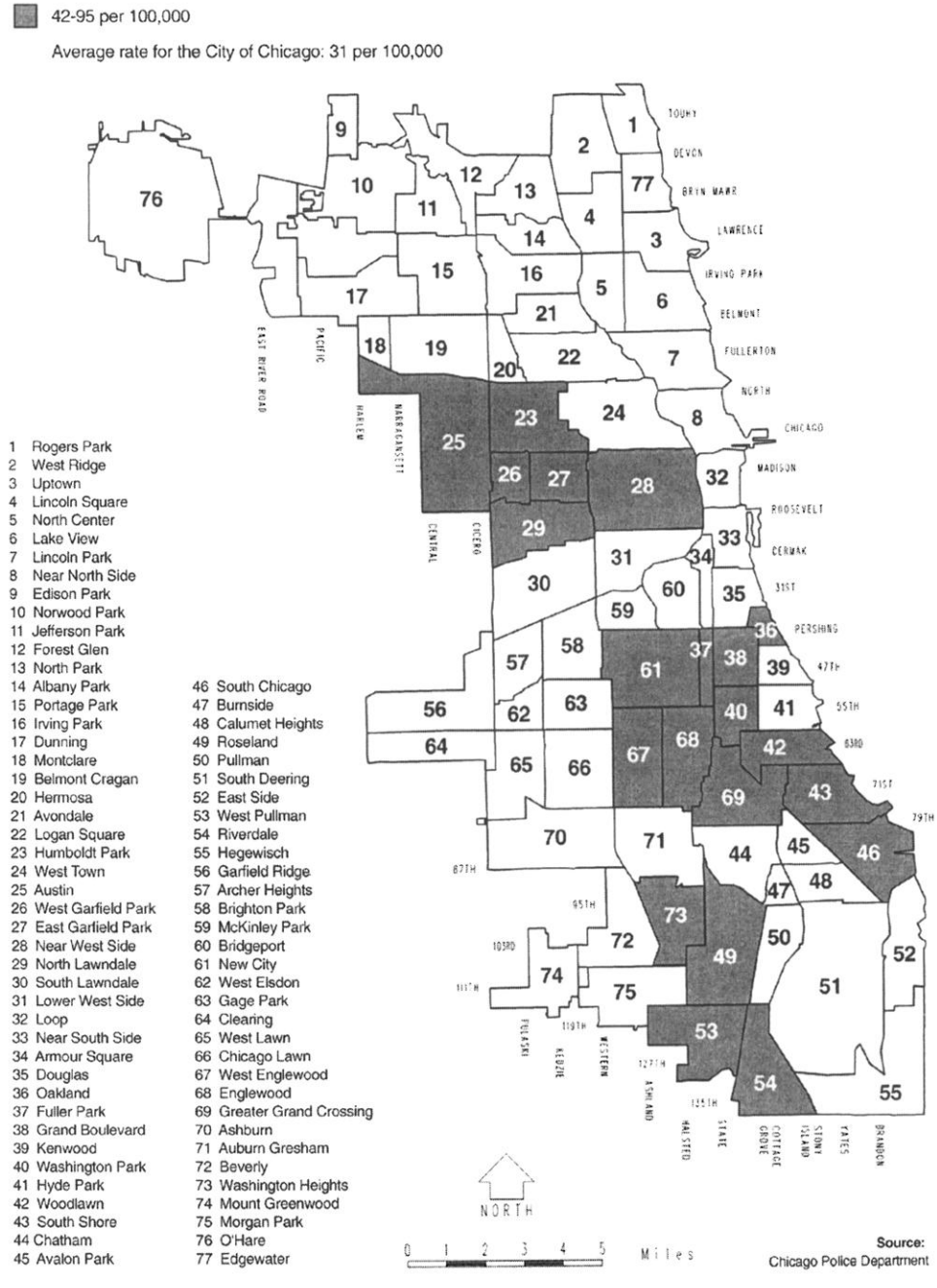

Figure 5. Community areas with highest homicide rates, 1994–1995.

Table 1. Chicago community areas with highest heat-related death rates

Community area	Heat-related deaths/100,000	Percent of population black	Median family income ($)
Fuller Park	92	99	8,371
Woodlawn	73	96	17,714
Archer Heights	54	0	37,744
Grand Crossing	52	99	22,931
Washington Park	51	99	9,657
Grand Boulevard	47	99	8,371
McKinley Park	45	0	31,597
North Lawndale	40	96	14,209
Chatham	35	99	29,258
Kenwood	33	77	31,954
Englewood	33	99	22,931
West Town	32	10	20,532
Brighton Park	31	0	30,677
Burnside	30	98	30,179
Near South Side	29	94	7,576
Chicago	7	39	30,707

Data based on 514 heat-related deaths located by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

ethnoracially driven battles for control of space at both the state and street levels – ranging from Chicago's urban renewal and public housing programs to the race riots in which white communities attacked African Americans who tried to move into predominantly white neighborhoods[34] – this ring of death perfectly expresses the human cost of long-standing ethnoracial exclusion in the metropolis. Historic technologies of power, division, and differentiation, and not, as the early Chicago school urban sociologists would have theorized, natural ecological patterns of migration and progression, explain the spatial patterns of mortality.

The heaviest concentration of high-death areas is in the neighborhoods immediately south of the Loop, beginning at the Near South Side, progressing south into the historic Black Belt and beyond to the newer African-American communities, such as Woodlawn and Chatham, east and further south; and another pocket with high mortality rates starts west of the Loop in the Near West Side area, extends through the western portion of the Black Belt (stopping before West Garfield Park), and moves north into West Town and Logan Square. As Figures 4 and 5 show, both of these large regions are notable for their high levels of poverty and violent crime. Of the fifteen community areas with the

Table 2. Total heat-related deaths by age and ethnoracial status, Chicago residents

Age	Non-Latino white	Non-Latino black	Non-Latino other	Latino	Total
< 55	27	39	0	1	67
55–64	25	45	1	4	75
65–74	62	64	0	1	127
75–84	90	66	2	1	159
85+	28	42	1	2	93
Total	252	256	4	9	521

Source: Chicago Department of Public Health.

highest death rates during the heat wave, eleven contained unusually high proportions of people living below half of the official poverty line, and ten are home to populations between 94 and 99 percent black. In addition, high community area death rates are strongly associated with high rates of homicide and the number of seniors living alone.[35]

There is, however, an analytical danger in using community area data to document the spatial logic of the heat wave's effects. The large size and overall ethnoracial or class diversity of some of the community areas hide smaller pockets of poverty, crime, and even high heat-wave deaths in neighborhoods within them. One single block in Uptown notorious for its dilapidated single-room occupancy dwellings, for example, was the spot of at least seven heat-related deaths, making it perhaps the most deadly location in the city; yet Uptown as a whole was not one of the fifteen areas with the highest general death-rates. This does not mean that community area measures do not show the relationships between area characteristics and heat-related deaths. Rather, if there is a risk of ecological fallacy here it is that community area data might underestimate the connections among poverty, crime, and heat-related deaths because, as we see in Uptown and Woodlawn, where three people died at a private nursing shelter housing seniors on public aid, they do not capture the intensity of heat-related problems in the area's most degraded sections, streets, and buildings.[36]

The demographics of mortality also fit a pattern – this one familiar to public health researchers and practitioners – predicated on the age, gender, and ethnoracial status of city residents. Seventy-three percent of the 525 Chicagoans whose deaths were medically confirmed as "heat-related" during the month of July were over 65 years old; the death rate for seniors above 65 was 16 times higher than the rate for

those under 65. Race and ethnicity mattered also: non-Latino blacks were almost twice more likely than non-Latino whites to die of the heat. Although African Americans make up 39 percent of the city population and African-American seniors represent less than one-third of Chicago residents over 65, black seniors constituted 45 percent of the deaths for Chicagoans 65 and over, and non-elderly blacks, who accounted for 59 percent of all deaths among those under 65, died even more disproportionately. Latinos, though, who number about 19 percent of the city population, represented only 2 percent of the overall mortality. Men died in greater numbers than women; they were 2.5 times more likely to die because of the heat.[37] These numbers (with the exception of the low rate for Latinos, which I address below) largely confirm the trends reported in several studies of heat-related mortality published before the 1995 Chicago disaster, all of which might have helped the local government establish a plan for identifying and aiding the most vulnerable groups before the heat became so deadly.

"Government alone cannot do it all": City services in the empowerment era

The city government neglected to design a plan for protecting its residents during the heat wave, but its failure to ensure the welfare of its endangered constituents was also linked to a two-layered political crisis common to local governments since the radical reduction of public services in the 1980s: first, the general poverty of the state because of the massive cutbacks in spending for social services, and second, given this state of destitution, the lack of mechanisms and organizational competency to activate even the paltry programs that remain. The first layer of this crisis, the decrease in resources available to public service programs, has been well documented by social scientists and public policy experts.[38] The second layer of the crisis, which was shaped by the new organizational techniques and service principles that structure local government, proved especially dangerous for Chicago residents during the heat wave. If the general neglect of Chicago's most vulnerable residents established the potential for such a deadly disaster, the acute failure of the local government ensured the final outcome.[39]

Given the entrenched American history of city governments' unresponsiveness to the needs of poor communities, it would have been surprising if the local Chicago government had effectively protected local resi-

dents during the crisis. As organizations, city governments function poorly to secure the welfare of people in need, and they do so only in unusual circumstances.[40] In the current structure and spirit of local government, the state is even less willing and able to provide key services to marginalized residents. Splintered into several departments and jurisdictions, partially privatized through sub-contracts to other agencies and corporations, lacking oversight while driven mostly by the strategies of individual administrations, guided by the logic that citizen "consumers" are responsible for securing their own access to services, and more interested in policing than protecting residents of distressed neighborhoods, Chicago's political machinery all but broke down when its most precarious patrons needed it most.

During the heat wave several city departments failed to provide services that, had they been activated, would have saved hundreds of lives. The Police Department neglected to activate the local units designed to assist seniors, even though the heat wave represented precisely the kind of situation in which they would have been effective. The police, whose nearly one-billion dollar budget has been partly justified through the development of community policing, proved to have little ability to mobilize its resources during the crisis. Other agencies also neglected to take emergency measures. The Fire Department, which is responsible for the Office of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Services, had no mechanism for issuing a heat emergency. The Department of Human Services did little to contact isolated seniors to warn them of the dangers of the climate, nor did it provide adequate transportation and security to help vulnerable residents travel to the few public cooling centers that the city had opened. The Department of Public Health had no mechanism for coordinating emergency medical services, which were so strained by the outbreak of illness and death that many hospitals were unable to admit people in need of urgent care or to help find alternative hospitals. Throughout the city, public agencies rejected offers from volunteers because they had no idea what to do with them. Agencies such as the Department on Aging that did activate their emergency measures for assisting city residents could do little to overcome the shortcomings of the other offices.

There are two primary explanations for this broad set of failures. First, in the new administrative logic of state agencies, problems such as the heat wave are not the exclusive concern of public service providers. For, as the Mayor's Commission on the heat wave insists, "government alone cannot do it all,"[41] and residents themselves must take responsi-

bility for securing their own welfare and keeping themselves out of hospitals and other places that provide public assistance. In most American cities, local governments now claim that their role should no longer be that of universal provider, but of enabler.[42] Appropriating the discourse of empowerment as a moral justification to abandon poor communities, state administrators and politicians, convinced that the best way to protect the poor is to force them to protect themselves, are relinquishing responsibility for many of their services to the people least able to provide them. The rapid introduction of market operating principles and discourse into the public sector has facilitated this process. People in need are now considered consumers of public goods in a competitive market rather than citizens entitled to benefits because they are members of a political community. As consumers, they are expected to provide for themselves in the available market of services. Yet poor, infirm communities are likely to be poor consumers of public services, in part because they have less access to information and thus a limited set of choices from which to choose. Indeed, social workers in the city report that the most deprived senior clients are the least able to claim the public benefits – ranging from health care and prescription drugs to social security income – for which they are eligible because they have trouble interpreting the complex forms and bureaucratic requirements that they must file and fulfill. Many of the Chicagoans who died or required emergency care during the heat wave were no doubt among those who, failing to master the system, became, in the state's logic, their own victims.

The second cause of the local government's failure, and also the mechanism that facilitates the rise of this new philosophy for urban governance, is the radical decentralization, fragmentation, and privatization of the social-service programs and downsized public agencies that they city has preserved. Fragmentation of city departments coupled with the state's importation of flexible, lateral management systems from the private sector left the local government with little capacity to coordinate services during an emergency.[43] Lacking clear oversight, every agency became partly responsible for handling the crisis, which made the collective action problem of passing the buck all the more dire.

Both of these problems affected the crisis in medical services during the heat wave. Between July 13 and 16, twenty-three of forty-five hospitals in the city network went on bypass status, whereby they refused to accept new patients for emergency care because they were using all

their urgent care facilities. In one period eighteen hospitals went on bypass status at the same time, making it impossible for residents in the most affected areas to receive timely medical attention. According to a report issued by the Chairman of the State Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, the south and southeast sections of the city, both of which contain disproportionately high levels of low income and black populations, had "very few, if any, hospitals ... available to accept patients delivered by emergency ambulance"; but "the Chicago Department of Health was apparently not aware of the magnitude of the crisis at area hospitals."[44]

The city had no government agency to monitor hospitals' policies for turning away patients and it is not clear that all of the decisions to enter bypass status were appropriate. With so many emergency rooms shut down and no central program to notify ambulances when and where hospitals closed or re-opened, people in need of emergency treatment were shuttled from area to area until their driver could find an available facility, and ambulances were so tied up that at least fifty-five emergency cases went unattended for more than thirty minutes, a response time the city itself considers totally unacceptable. These conditions explain how an administrator at one hospital south of the Loop could report receiving patients from more than ten miles south of her hospital. The medical systems in poorer areas of the city, long insufficient for the needs of the local population but reduced even further by cuts in public health programs since the 1980s, all but collapsed under the pressure of the heat.

Home alone, home afraid, home sick: The rise of literal social isolation

In the city's official view, however, real fault for the health crisis lay in the hands of the poor and isolated seniors who, when contacted by neighbors or service agencies, did not heed the instruction to leave their apartments and find air conditioning or at least to open their windows and doors. According to the Mayor's Commission, this showed "that those most at risk may be least likely to want or accept help from government,"[45] but in fact it exemplified the extent to which public agencies and officials, who by out-sourcing service provisions to private contractors increasingly distance themselves from impoverished areas of the city, have failed to recognize the level of insecurity and the depth of deprivation in the most distressed communities.

Ground-level scrutiny of the everyday world of Chicago's most precarious residents reveals that they did not refuse to leave their homes because they do not want or are unwilling to accept help from government, but because the proximate social and spatial conditions in which they live make it unacceptably difficult or risky to leave their apartments.

The advancing deterioration of neighborhood infrastructure has been particularly damaging to the city's poor elderly, thousands of whom have responded to the environmental changes by barricading themselves in their small homes, using their walls to protect themselves from a world they perceive as too threatening to enter, all but abandoning a society that has thoroughly abandoned them. Seniors who are trapped within their own residential units represent an emerging group of thoroughly marginalized city residents – the *literally socially isolated* – who, according to several case managers who work with them, rarely leave their residential units, have little contact with family and friends, and, because of cutbacks in public health and transportation programs (essential for bringing them to health providers), are unable to receive many of the basic services they need to stay healthy. While the size and demographic composition of this group is unclear – three case managers at Metropolitan Family Services independently estimated that 90 percent of their clients are socially isolated, and a recent study found that 48 percent of the city's elderly have no one available to help them[46] – it is significant enough to constitute a major problem in the life of the city. In fact, social service workers, political organizers, and city officials share at least one position in their analysis of the heat wave: the literally socially isolated made up a significant number of the people it killed.

The status of the literally isolated should not be confused with that of the communities William Julius Wilson designates as socially isolated because of their "lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society."[47] While there is considerable debate about the empirical status of Wilson's socially isolated urban communities and the social and economic effects of the kind of social isolation he describes,[48] the silent deaths of Chicagoans living alone and out of touch with members of their communities signal the dire reality of an emerging, emergency social condition – social life constrained by infirmity or fear and reduced to the boundaries of a tiny apartment – whose features and consequences have received scant attention from scholars and policy makers.

During the heat wave, researchers from the Division of Epidemiological Studies at the Illinois Department of Public Health report, the high correlation between community area heat-related death rates and community area homicide rates indicated both the depth and the dangerousness of fear itself. High levels of violent crime in concentrated areas, the researchers explain, "can create fears influencing people's desire to open windows, leave home, or stay away from home for extended periods. Even during a heat wave, these fears may cause additional reluctance to go to cooling centers or to open windows."[49]

Such fear and isolation among the elderly is all the more understandable in light of the observations of Elijah Anderson, who argues that for residents of high crime areas becoming violent oneself is a logical adaptation that enables self-preservation.[50] For seniors, particularly those who are unhealthy, becoming violent is a less viable option. Their retreat into seclusion reflects a lack of alternatives in their struggle for security.

This problem can be particularly onerous for seniors living in senior public housing units, where changes in city housing policy have forced many to give up not only the public parks and streets that once framed their communal lives but the public spaces within their own apartment buildings as well. Several years ago the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) opened senior buildings, dispersed throughout the city but generally located in safer areas than the family public housing complexes, to people with disabilities as well as seniors. When legislative changes made people with substance abuse problems eligible for social security insurance, the CHA welcomed them into senior housing units as well. This act of accommodation has proven disastrous for senior residents and the communities they had once established within their buildings. The mix of low-income substance abusers, many of whom continue to engage in crime to finance their habits, and low-income seniors, many of whom keep their savings and everything else they own in their tiny apartments, creates a perfect formula for instilling insecurity deep in the buildings' environments. Elderly residents of senior buildings throughout the city now voice the same complaint: they feel trapped in their rooms, afraid that if they leave they might be attacked or have their apartment robbed, and many refuse to go out even to the ground floor common rooms. Their urban burrows are sealed tightly and it is not uncommon to find make-shift security systems designed to ward off invaders. One woman I visited had wedged a piece of metal into her door so that it screeched noisily enough to awaken everyone

on her side of the floor when it closed; and a client of a social worker I shadowed has wired his door-knob to an electrical current so that it shocks everyone who touches it unless he disconnects the wiring. By 1996 the CHA had acknowledged the problem its housing policy has created, and it has pledged to remove people with substance abuse problems from the senior buildings within the next few years. Until then, however, insecurity will rule the lives of many seniors living in public housing.

The tale of two neighborhoods: Variations in the social morphology of poverty

The peculiar sociospatial arrangement grouping seniors, perhaps the most vulnerable city residents, with young substance abusers, who are among the city's most threatening to poor seniors, represents an extreme form of social instability, but degraded living conditions in other areas of the city have given rise to similar protective and isolating practices. Urban social networks, historically rooted in family and neighborhood life, have long grounded the everyday worlds of city dwellers, creating not only a communal basis for social life but also a set of extended kinship ties that ensure the welfare of community members during hard times. Indeed, one of the great strengths of the Chicago school of urban sociology was its attention to the importance of relationships within neighborhoods in structuring the quality of community life – a point contemporary social scientists often overlook as their focus shifts away from the community life of cities. The power of these networks to preserve the health of local communities was evident in the Latino communities, which, despite a general socioeconomic status that placed their collective well-being at risk, withstood the heat wave much more effectively than any other ethnic group in the city. While the relatively low proportion of seniors in Latino communities accounts for part of the low Latino mortality rate, age does not fully explain why Latinos, who comprise about 23 percent of the city population, represented two percent of heat wave deaths.

Here sociological studies provide evidence for what public health workers could only guess: although Latinos have also suffered from the decline in state programs and local economic opportunities, the close social ties in many of Chicago's Latino communities, extending through several generations and sustained by better neighborhood conditions, help maintain the vitality of collective life and ensure that

the most precarious members are looked after.[51] There is, however, great variation in the social networks within the Chicago Latino community, and it would be wrong to assume that Chicago Latinos are universally more socially integrated than other groups. Community-based networks differ not only according to cultural traditions but to local institutions, sociospatial and economic conditions, and environmental and demographic pressures as well; and there are notable differences on these counts among, for example, Chicago's Mexican American, Central American, and Puerto Rican communities.[52] While it is important to guard against over-generalizing from some Latino communities' cultural practices and reifying the trope of Latino community solidarity,[53] the remarkable success of Chicago's Latino community in surviving the heat wave suggests that some general features of Latino social morphology help buffer Latino residents of Chicago from some of the most damaging consequences of urban poverty and meteorological shock.

It is possible to provide a provisional explanation for the common social, spatial, and economic conditions that enabled Chicago's Latinos to withstand the heat.[54] First, the organization of what Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez calls "clustered households," namely, the proximal residential patterns of family members and close relations, provides the geographical basis for intense social ties and, during the heat wave, close attention to the status of frail or unhealthy family members. Second, the strength of lineal relations across generations, specifically the integration of elders into the family lives or even the homes of younger family members, allows for intimate provision of care during bouts of illness or crises. Third, conditions of the Chicago labor market and the size of Latino household clusters make it likely that at least some members of the network will be able to provide the resources necessary to avoid the most dangerous problems related to poverty. All of these forms of sociospatial organization, particularly the last, are predicated on the conditions of the broader economic and political environment, as all require a material substratum of tangible goods to function effectively.

The embeddedness of cultural practices within the socioeconomic conditions of local communities helps account for why even low-income Latinos survived the heat wave more successfully than Chicago's most disproportionately impoverished group, African Americans. Although commonly positioned together as the subjects of popular, scholarly, and political discourse on the putative "urban underclass," low-income Latino and African-American communities have, in fact, experienced

poverty differently as changes in local labor markets and state policies have imposed different pressures on the groups.[55] In Chicago, the ordinary cultures of low-income blacks and Latinos are structured around great variations in the location and composition of neighborhoods as well as in the vitality of the job market. Simply put, low-income Latino communities and low-income African-American communities are situated in areas with objectively different characteristics, characteristics that are of vital importance to the welfare and life chances of local residents.

To begin, Chicago's low-income Latino communities live largely outside of the most extreme poverty areas in the city, and the neighborhoods they inhabit are more animated by commercial activity, institutional vitality, architectural integrity, and public space utility than those in the most disadvantaged African-American neighborhoods.[56] Indeed, twelve of the thirteen community areas with the highest poverty levels in the city are home to populations over 90 percent black (the remaining community is over 70 percent black), whereas none of the fifteen areas with the most concentrated poverty is primarily Latino. Latino neighborhoods are also more ethnoracially and ethnically integrated than Chicago's low-income black community areas, which are among the most segregated places in the country. As Massey and Denton argue, this integration helps create a basis for political coalitions that fight to improve daily conditions as well as to ensure that the state provides services in emergencies such as the heat wave. While there is no systematic evidence that low-income black communities were more neglected than other communities during the heat wave, the social service workers I interviewed reported that their clients living in all black, low-income areas received little assistance from the state. Many social service providers refuse even to enter the most stigmatized African-American neighborhoods in the city, and among those who do it is common to avoid them after mid-morning, when the streets are perceived to be more dangerous. A number of the city's black politicians expressed frustration with the social service efforts of the current political regime, arguing that Mayor Daley had long neglected the city's black community and that it was no surprise to see his administration do it during the crisis.

Low-income Latino neighborhoods are distinct from poor African-American areas, then, because they are not entirely low-income areas, they are not as sharply segregated, and they rest upon a comparatively more sound material substratum. As the heat wave made clear, the

social morphology of Latino poverty in places such as South Lawndale provides possibilities for well-being, and in crises even survival, that are less available in the most severe African-American poverty areas.

During the heat wave the variations between the sociospatial characteristics of Chicago's low-income African American and Latino communities became most clear on the west side of the city, where neighboring communities, North Lawndale and South Lawndale (areas 29 and 30, respectively, in figures 3–5), could not have experienced the heat wave more differently. In North Lawndale, where 96 percent of the residents are black, the heat-related death rate, about 40 per 100,000, was among the highest in the city; in South Lawndale, where 85 percent of residents are Latino (which is unusually concentrated for Latinos in the city), the heat-related death rate, about 3 per 100,000, was among the lowest, even though four of the five community areas it borders ranked with the fifteen most devastated places in the city (see Figure 3 and Table 1). Although the Chicago Latino community has relatively few seniors, and some local commentators speculated that this demographic characteristic accounted for the low Latino heat-related mortality rate, it is worth noting that South Lawndale has a comparatively high level of aged persons living alone, whereas North Lawndale has one of the lowest levels of seniors living alone in the city. Both areas are among the most impoverished neighborhoods in Chicago, but it was the work of the state, the texture and intensity of the communities' poverty, and the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and the local cultural practices related to it that largely determined the fate of area residents.

While most scholarly and popular discourse for describing and classifying urban poverty would define both North and South Lawndale as high poverty or underclass areas, field work and survey research in the two communities illustrate major distinctions between the two neighborhoods and enable a more nuanced account of local conditions. Census data from 1990 point to some of the key differences in the demographic and economic features of the areas. In 1990, the median annual family income in Chicago was about $ 31,000, but only $ 23,000 in South Lawndale and a mere $ 14,000 in North Lawndale. The same year 22 percent of South Lawndale residents lived below the poverty line and 14 percent of the civilian labor force was officially unemployed; in North Lawndale 44 percent of the population was impoverished and 27 percent officially unemployed – meaning that poverty in North Lawndale was not only more severe (in terms of income) but also more pervasive than in South Lawndale.[57]

The labor market has had a deep influence on the demographic composition of the areas. The 1990 North Lawndale population was about 47,000, a decrease of 23 percent from 1980 and an indicator of the mass exodus of residents in search of a better living environment; in South Lawndale, however, the 1990 population was about 81,000, an increase of 8 percent from 1980 and a sign of the area's renewed attractiveness. Maintaining vigor while changing from a largely white, working-class community to a predominantly Latino area during the past two decades, South Lawndale is growing through a different stage in its development than North Lawndale, which has been declining since the late 1960s.

If abstract statistical information about the two communities does not show the on-the-ground conditions of everyday life, qualitative descriptions portray the life of the neighborhoods with brutal clarity. Formally known as south Lawndale but renamed Little Village by residents eager to dissociate their neighborhood from the stigma of Lawndale, the streets in this densely populated Latino area are animated and busy.[58] This vigorous street activity is a key source of community life, the socio-spatial foundation of the social networks that connect local residents.[59] Once Twenty-Sixth Street but now called *Calle Mexico*, the commercial heart of the Little Village is full of display signs advertising in Spanish, lined with restaurants, banks, clothing stores, grocers, medical centers, and travel agencies, and crowded with street vendors, shoppers, and community residents. A large arch stands at the main entry to the street from the East, greeting visitors with the words, "*Bienvenidos a Little Village*," and other signs with the name Little Village are scattered around the area.[60] Surrounding streets are predominantly residential, with housing stock of varying quality but few abandoned buildings. The remnants of the city's once flourishing manufacturing economy are south of 31st Street, where there are still some open facilities.[61]

The neighborhood changes gradually as it extends northward, until it reaches Cermak Avenue, the main border between the Little Village and North Lawndale. Although they are only a few blocks away, the core streets of North Lawndale contrast sharply with *Calle Mexico*. Eerily void of human traffic, streets such as 16th Street, Ogden Avenue, and Roosevelt Road feel ghostly with their decaying buildings, boarded windows, empty lots, closed shops, liquor stores, and small fast food joints. Over 40 percent of the land in North Lawndale is vacant, and the general quality of the once-elegant housing stock is poor. The street activity that animates collective life and connects social groups in the Little Village is markedly less prosperous here.[62] According to one

study. North Lawndale has 48 state lottery agents, 50 currency exchanges, and 99 licensed bars and liquor stores, but only one bank and one supermarket for its population of nearly 50,000.[63] Development projects have been limited and, until recently, too meager to succeed. In 1981, Pyramidwest Development Corporation sponsored construction of the federally subsidized Lawndale Terrace, but its plans for a shopping center and an industrial park failed because no major tenants were interested in them; and in 1987 a non-profit organization's effort to build a small business "incubator" building collapsed as well.

The neighborhood was not always so degraded. In the early twentieth century North Lawndale was a booming community, home to Polish, Czechoslovakian, and Russian Jewish immigrants. In the 1940s African Americans attempted to join the mix, but white residents would not tolerate their presence and by the 1950s they were moving out in mass. North Lawndale, which became the main point of entry for blacks migrating from the south, experienced another population boom in the 1950s, when the number of African Americans increased from 13,000 to more than 113,000 in less than a decade.[64] In the 1960s, though, state-sponsored urban renewal programs and construction of ethnoracially segregated public housing reorganized the neighborhood for the worse, and the area was further damaged as segregation fostered neglect from other segments of the metropolitan community.

Pushed on a descending path by the state and hostile whites, North Lawndale was the site of large riots after Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, and the next year its largest employers began to move out. The community was once the home for two large factories, the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric with over 43,000 jobs, and a Harvester plant which employed 14,000 workers, and was also the world headquarters for Sears Roebuck, which provided over 10,000 local jobs. Harvester left the community at the end of the 1960s and Sears quickly followed, moving most of its offices downtown but leaving a catalog distribution center and about 3,000 jobs until 1988. The Hawthorne factory closed down gradually, shutting its gates for good in 1984. This large corporate abandonment generated a deeper cycle of commercial flight, as local banks, small stores, and many small businesses lost their basis of support and relocated or closed themselves. The process of economic and social decay has continued in the last decades, intensifying to catastrophic levels in the 1980s and 1990s as funding for urban programs and local demand for industrial labor disappeared.

This short narrative of North Lawndale's decline, culminating in the large death toll during the heat wave, illustrates the depth of the relation among state programs, economic vitality, and community organization. Indeed, it is impossible to understand why conditions there are currently so dangerous, why residents are so insecure not only during unusual crises but in their everyday lives, without tracing the pattern of ethnoracially charged intolerance at the community and state level, stratification followed by a period of malign neglect and industrial abandonment. In North Lawndale, the relationship of state, economy, and society produced atrophy rather than synergy as the demise of each component forced the degeneration of the others. Perhaps what is most striking is that so many residents continue to press for their neighborhood's development and to struggle to improve the welfare of their community. Despite all of its recent problems the community has fought to enact school reform, establish a community banking center, build more housing, and spark new commercial and cultural activity. While the west side of North Lawndale has witnessed little progress, the east side is currently experiencing a major spark of development, especially in the area surrounding the old Sears headquarters. There are two banks in the vicinity, several new housing developments with homes and apartments selling for up to $200,000, a multiplex movie theater, a major chain drug store, and a large mall that should be operating by the end of 1998. If, as planned, a full service grocery store opens there in 1999, it will be the first of its kind in the area for decades. Despite these successes, the material conditions of the neighborhood frustrate other potential development projects, instilling deep forms of insecurity in life of the community as well as in those who invest there.

Throughout Chicago, the new structures of deprivation and division in low-income communities such as North Lawndale have shaken the foundations of social life. Fear stemming from the violence of everyday life, which is especially pervasive in neighborhoods where the underground economy has replaced the formal commercial market and violent crime levels are significantly higher than in other areas of the city, strikes at the heart of urban social networks by engendering distrust and undermining neighborhood solidarity.[65] But there are other bases for the decline in social networks that impairs the health of urban dwellers. As neighborhood decay has left parks, streets, and commercial institutions less viable as public spaces for community life, the local government has reduced the availability of public transportation in the city's already underserved neighborhoods, making it all the more difficult for residents to visit or be visited by friends and organ-

izations in other areas of the city and almost impossible to get to and from work. The shortage of transportation poses particularly serious problems for seniors and the ill when they need medical care – and many of the city's most infirm residents fail to receive the treatments they need largely because they are unable to reach medical institutions – and it restricts the possibilities for social connections in the city as well.

Effectively cut off from the circulation of primary goods, such as decent housing, health care, and work opportunities, as well as from other residents of the city, the most deprived neighborhoods bear the stigma of failure and decay and threaten to mark residents similarly. Many respond exactly as have the residents of North Lawndale – further dissociating themselves from their neighbors, grounding their own identities against the dominant narratives and representations of denigration that define their communities, and establishing a social distance that enables a preservation of dignity and self-respect but jeopardizes the viability of collective organization and support – even when they cannot physically leave the neighborhood.[67] The danger of these arrangements could not be better exemplified than it was during the heat wave, when it became clear that this emerging form of urban alienation is a social problem of grave significance.

Down and out in Uptown: An urban inferno on SRO "death row"

This was news to no one in the single-room-occupancy dwellings (SROs) that house thousands of Chicagoans on the edge of homelessness. Scattered throughout the city but heavily concentrated in low-income neighborhoods, these units represent the last option of insulation from the dangers of life on the streets but impose their own set of threats to the security of residents. SROs vary greatly in quality and form: several hundred units are funded with federal housing grants, well kept, staffed by trained social workers and busy with programs for job training, substance abuse treatment, and habilitation to working life. But most for-profit buildings lack these services entirely and function instead as little more than low-grade shelters for the marginal or mentally ill.

Managed well, SROs can be an effective and realistic source of housing for urban residents otherwise unable to enter the housing market. Historically, they have constituted an important alternative for single people and poor families looking for inexpensive housing in city centers;

and even today, there are more people living in hotels than in all of America's public housing.[68] In the last fifty years, however, two changes in government policy have reduced the viability of SRO housing, degrading the stock of the buildings and the quality of life for their residents. First, the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s and urban development programs of the 1970s led to the destruction or conversion of millions of units, but the federal government funded or assisted virtually no new hotel-style public housing until recently. The destruction of SROs continued into the 1980s, with Chicago alone losing almost 23,000 units – the equivalent of 92 public housing projects – from 1973 to 1984.[69] Second, changes in mental health policy sparked a massive influx of former patients into the low-end of the housing market and drastically altering the conditions of life in the hotels. By the 1970s, SROs had become homes for some of the most precarious of the elderly and poor, but demand for them remained high because of the lack of other housing options.

Many hotel proprietors take advantage of this market condition by charging relatively high prices but neglecting to maintain the quality of their buildings or properly train their staffs. In the most degraded hotels, which social workers call "street hotels" or "open hotels," it is common to find unprotected windows, open elevator shafts, uncollected garbage, rats, broken toilets, old wiring, and no fire alarms. When they want to turn-over clientele and raise prices, managers have been known to shut off heat and hot water, lock toilets, close elevators in tall buildings, plug room locks, lose mail, refuse entrance to social service providers, fumigate rooms while residents are in them, remove lobby furniture, and send thugs to intimidate residents.[70] These SROs, as the clerk in one of Uptown's most dilapidated hotels told me, serve as places "where people come to maintain their addictions, live alone, and die." This was never more true than during the heat wave, when the architectural and social conditions in the SROs made them the most dangerous places in the city, more dangerous, even, than the streets.

In the large Wilson Club Hotel it seems a miracle that only a few residents died in the heat. Managers there have used thin wood to subdivide the former industrial building into hundreds of units large enough to fit only a bed, a dresser, and a chair. The wood divisions stop several feet below the high, concrete ceilings, but residents and their property are protected by a key-lock door and chicken wire pleated atop the wooden walls to serve as ceilings where none other exists. There are a few windows on the exterior walls and fire escapes on every

floor, but these offer little ventilation to the residents lodged in the belly of the building; and there is no air conditioning in the dim public space on the ground floor, which was always empty when I visited.[71] Unlike the non-profit SROs, there are no services connecting residents to medical or vocational support structures in the area; and the management's policy of non-intervention in the lives of building residents is guided by a principle of tolerance and respect that would be admirable were so many of the building's residents not so dangerously ill. Health failures are not uncommon there, nor in the other nearby SROs (organized similarly and also home to multiple heat wave deaths). Neighborhood residents, who have tried for years to have the SROs improved, note that the heat wave merely heightened what is in effect a permanent health crisis in the buildings.[72] They know from the frequent circulation of ambulances on the block that it doesn't take the heat to put SRO occupants at risk of disaster.

At Lakefront, the federally subsidized single-room occupancy complex scattered a few blocks away from the row of dilipadated SROs, residents fortunate enough to have found a place there were well guarded from the dangerous weather. With the large staff, comfortable, air conditioned lounges, and well-maintained residential units made possible by government funding, Lakefront's managers can help occupants through emergencies such as the heat wave as well as the daily struggle to establish personal health and security in the tough city. But few can get housing in complexes like Lakefront: of the city's known SRO units more than 90 percent are in for-profit buildings such as the Wilson, and less than a thousand offer services comparable to Lakefront's. There are so many applicants to the government subsidized buildings that they now refuse to accept more names to the waiting list; and those who do reach the top of the list must pass an elaborate screening and selection process, designed to weed out applicants who are using illegal drugs or give evidence of behavioral problems deemed unmanageable by the staff, to obtain a unit. While in the past years Lakefront has expanded the number of buildings it operates, there are no plans for reproducing the Lakefront model on a scale large enough to provide better housing for the thousands of Chicago SRO occupants on the edge. In fact the very opposite is true: in the era of state retrenchment even programs that show such clear benefits to residents' health are in jeopardy of being eliminated if they cannot find private support.[73]

During crises, such as the heat wave, and during mundane, normal conditions, the radical differences in SROs such as Lakefront and the

Wilson illustrate the two-fold political problems – the miserly welfare state coupled with the political weakness of most marginalized groups – for Chicagoans living on the edge. The impoverished federal and local welfare states are unable to afford high quality single-room occupancy dwellings for the great majority of SRO occupants, and consequently most people moving into or out of homelessness find their efforts to attain health and stability, let alone opportunity for advancement, upset by the brutal conditions of their residential units. Marginalized from the first, structural level of state programs, poor urban residents unable to enter the public or non-profit housing sector are then doubly excluded at the second, conjunctural level of state services, the protection from daily and emergency problems, because of their weak political power and position. In a series of interviews, residents of the Lakefront buildings explained that not only did their administrative and social worker staffs personally check on occupants and encourage them to come down to the air conditioned lounges, but police and fire department officers as well as local social service agencies such as Red Cross also visited, bringing food and cold drinks. Residents of the Wilson and, no doubt, the for-profit SROs like it, received far less assistance and in turn were more likely to be among the many who died alone.

Naturalizing disaster: The politics of representing death

As the death toll in the SROs and other poor areas of the city began to mount, local journalists and governmental officials established their roles as the primary explicators of the disaster for the urban community. The heat wave became a public event only after it was reconstructed in the journalistic field and political field, both of which operate according to their own sets of pressures, forces, and purposes, and therefore produce information that, though presented as fact, represents journalistic and political ways of seeing and not seeing the social world. For different reasons, journalistic and political representations of the heat wave de-emphasized the social and political determinants of the disaster. Local political officials had obvious incentives to portray the heat wave as either a non-event or as a natural, and therefore uncontrollable, disaster, one that no one could have anticipated or done anything to prevent. If the event was defined politically then they would be implicated in the disaster; and in an urban community that recently ended the political career of its mayor, Michael Bilandic, in part because of his failure to manage a blizzard, local officials under-

stood what was at stake for them in the heat wave. The explanation for how and why journalists contributed to the naturalization of the disaster is more complicated, but the answer lies in the conditions of production in the journalistic field, including not only the commercial interests and motives of the field, but also (and relatedly) the routines and dispositions of journalists themselves.

The local media initially considered the heat wave to be a trivial story and covered it with light features such as one about the difficulty of finding air conditioners, but when the mortality levels began to rise the press shifted its coverage to the story of the deaths.[74] Yet the immediate visibility of the crisis did not prevent Mayor Daley from attempting to conceal or deflect attention away from the city's morbid condition. Daley, holder of the mayorship his father had made the throne of machine politics, had won his seat in 1989 on the grounds that, "We can't close our eyes to [Chicago's] problems any longer. Being accountable starts in City Hall. Because the responsibility for managing the city lies with the mayor ... I won't wait until disaster strikes."[75] But under the heat he changed his message. Refusing to acknowledge that the city had failed to protect the health of its citizens, Daley, who had neglected to issue a Heat Emergency Warning and to activate several possible emergency procedures during the city's deadliest week, groped wildly for alternative explanations or scapegoats he could blame for causing the crisis.

Confronted with early reports of the soaring death rates, Daley's initial response coupled denial with naturalization. "Every day," he lectured the press, "people die of natural causes. You can't put everything as heat-related.... Then everybody in the summer that dies will die of the heat."[76] His skepticism was a challenge not only to the empirical connection between the weather and the overload at the morgue and in the hospitals, but also to the medical and scientific credibility of Dr. Edmund Donoghue, whose tenure as the county's chief medical examiner long outdates that of the mayor and whose professional reputation is outstanding. Public denial thus proved an untenable, even embarrassing, official position for the city – especially when the body count mounted and Dr. Donoghue, told of Daley's criticisms, defended his claim to the media and received the support of his colleagues in the field. "The mayor is entitled to raise questions," the medical examiner explained diplomatically, but "If anything, we're underestimating the number of heat-related deaths."[77]

Having failed with his first explanation, the Mayor corrected himself with a new tactic: "I am not questioning anybody dying," he next asserted, and "I'm not insensitive," yet if the deaths were linked to the heat, he insisted, they were not related to the city's policies for handling the situation.[78] Instead, Daley claimed that two other parties were liable for the disaster. First he sounded a populist appeal, citing Commonwealth Edison, long a target of citizen scrutiny and discontent because of its near-monopoly on utilities provision, for its inability to maintain power supplies when they were most needed. "My office has been in touch with Commonwealth Edison throughout this power failure, but I'm not happy with their response." In fact, he threatened, the utilities provider might be in violation of its franchise agreement with the city and therefore liable for damages.

His next move, however, was an attack on the very constituency that has long given him their support. Invoking the bi-partisan logic of personal responsibility now ubiquitous within the American political field, Daley and his administrators blamed the victims of the heat waves themselves, as well as their families and friends, for failing to take care of themselves and each other. It is not the government, Daley and other city officials explained, but individuals who ensure their survival under extreme conditions. The heat wave deaths, in other words, were caused by behavioral deficiencies rather than structural conditions or political failures. "We're talking about people who die because they neglect themselves," argued Daniel Alvarez, the city Commissioner of Human Services. "We publicized common sense ideas, what the mayor was saying, drink plenty of water. These are people who don't read the newspapers, who don't watch television"; and Daley cautioned that "we need to be sure seniors do not become victims of their own independence."[79] The city government, the mayor claimed, "did all it could," and Alvarez added that "We did everything possible, everything possible." Sheila Lyne, Chicago's Health Commissioner, made the point most emphatically: "We acted in an emergency alert. Get that straight. We did it all."[80] With scapegoats established and the city government vindicated, the Mayor and his staff closed their defense of the city government by re-naturalizing the disaster. After all, the city's line concluded, the government cannot be held responsible for the heat.[81]

The truth, of course, is that the city government's many critics never argued that the city should be held responsible for the heat – only for the response to it, which was notably poor. But by representing the

criticisms of their response to the heat wave as manifestly ridiculous and capitalizing on the broader cultural notion that personal responsibility determines individual well-being, city officials managed to shield themselves from public scrutiny, deny liability for the deaths, and obscure what might have been the disaster's most obvious lesson: the simple fact that when government fails to secure the basic welfare of its citizens external forces beyond its control (such as the weather) can be uncontrollably dangerous.

During the heat wave, the frame of the "natural disaster" provided the city government with a perfect vehicle for defining the event in an explicitly non-political and commonsensical vocabulary with which its constituency and other observers would be comfortable and familiar. In addition, the debate over the death attribution kept journalists and residents focused on the question of whether the disaster was, in fact, real, long enough to deflect a public debate on the patterns of the deaths. As Erving Goffman explains, an event that is framed as natural is seen as inevitable, impossible to redirect, let alone prevent. "Success or failure in regard to [natural] events is not imaginable; no negative or positive sanctions are involved. Full determinism and determinateness prevail."[82] The natural frame through which public officials explained the heat wave deaths accounts for why the disaster, an unplanned accident in the scheme of news stories, did not produce the revelatory effects that Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester's theory of public events predicts. Molotch and Lester argue that during accidents, "event makers [such as public officials] are initially not ready and thus the powerful could give uncoordinated, mutually contradictory accounts." Unforeseen crises, then, tend to "foster revelations which are otherwise deliberately obfuscated by those with the resources to create routine events."[83] During the heat wave, Chicago event makers did indeed provide uncoordinated, contradictory, even inaccurate accounts of the deaths, and the local media offered moderate criticism of these slippages.[84] Yet the discourse of the natural disaster as well as the public debate over the accuracy of the medical examiner's death attributions allowed political officials to manage their misstatements and prevent the catastrophe from exposing what Molotch and Lester would consider the hidden order of the city. The frame itself prevented most Chicagoans, including most journalists who covered the disaster, from penetrating through the official debate to the social determinants of the crisis.[85]

The naturalizing frame, however, only partly explains why Mayor Daley's political reputation survived the crisis so well. Given Mayor

Bilandic's political demise in the aftermath of the blizzard, the question – which should be accompanied by the reminder that disaster management was not the only issue in Bilandic's mayorship[86] – remains: how is it that a natural disaster that kills hundreds of residents is less politically damaging than a disaster whose most significant effect was to block roads, stall public transportation, close schools and businesses, and restrict movement in the city? The answer is, in part, that the blizzard was much more damaging to Chicagoans with political clout than the heat wave, which, while killing hundreds, had almost no impact on elites and did relatively little harm to businesses.[87] By disabling the transportation infrastructure on which modern Chicago has been built, the blizzard produced major damage for the city's businesses and trapped many residents in their homes and neighborhoods.[88] The most public and scandalous of Bilandic's blunders was his decision to speed circulation on the elevated train lines by cutting off service to the city's black neighborhoods. This move earned Bilandic charges of discrimination and weakened his support among south side blacks (but not among west side blacks, whose support he retained). More importantly, though, Bilandic's failures contributed to his unpopularity among white ethnic neighborhoods on the city's northwest side, where in the election he lost to Jane Byrne by 13,000 votes, and in the white liberal community along the lakefront, where Byrne beat him by 21,000 votes.

The second reason that Bilandic's foibles were so politically damaging is that the local press mercilessly criticized Bilandic for his mismanagement of the crisis. The *Chicago Tribune* played a particularly important role in reporting on the mayor. The paper made special investigations into Bilandic's administration and exposed corruption in an organization that had been awarded contracts to develop a snow removal plan. After Bilandic announced the successful clearing of public lots that he planned to open for parking, thereby clearing the streets, a team of *Chicago Tribune* investigators discovered that the lots remained uncleared and published a story that represented the mayor as the perpetrator of the city's real "snow job." During the heat wave, the local press was less critical of Mayor Daley's performance. Even *Chicago Tribune* journalists report that several of their editors believed the mayor's claims that the heat wave deaths were not, in fact, related to the heat. The local press did not spare City Hall entirely in its reporting, but the major papers and television stations did less to uncover the hidden story of the disaster than they had in earlier years.

Local media and the symbolic construction of catastrophe

The few citizen groups and political activists who did challenge the city government's version of the heat wave story and use the accident to expose a hidden social order had few resources to help them make their case. Overwhelmed by the power of local officials to explain and memorialize the disaster for the urban community, grass-roots groups struggled to mount a powerful counter-narrative in a contest where words were weapons and interventions pointing to social inequality and state incompetence threatened to disrupt the urban regime. Metro Seniors in Action, an organization of some 10,000 low- to middle-income elderly Chicagoans, forged one of the strongest efforts to represent the disaster to the city, yet while their spokespersons received some attention from the major media their analysis of the event never emerged as a serious challenge to the dominant representations of the week. Their own newspaper, the *Metro Senior*, published two front-page stories, entitled, "Heatwave Ravages Seniors, Daley Passes Buck," and "The Mysterious Disappearing Senior Citizen Police Unit," in which staff writers editorialized about the city government's role in the deadly week. One month after the heat wave, the journal's lead article opened: "We will never forget the summer of 1995. The summer that a heat wave killed more people than the Chicago fire and the Oklahoma City bombing combined.... (T)hese deaths were preventable, and our city officials' attempt[ed] to deflect criticism by blaming the victims themselves.... Fortunately Metro Seniors was on hand to set the record straight ... Metro Seniors told the true story. The city could have done more. A LOT MORE."[89] Though the paper was read almost exclusively by group members, it stands as testimony to the efforts of community-based organizations to inscribe an alternative history of the event onto the record, as well as to their limited ability to accomplish this re-writing.

For both small groups such as Metro Seniors and major political institutions, the key to establishing an interpretation of the heat wave deaths was to gain access to the major commercial media, whose ability to produce and provide the most information about the city, as well as the categories and classification in which this information is framed, enable them to dominate the public life of the metropolis.[90] Although there was considerable variation in the coverage among different local media and even within individual news firms,[91] the great majority of the media coverage failed to establish the political determinants of the heat wave deaths, contributing, instead, to the natural-

ization of the disaster. The two most prominent sociological theories of media production, which I'll characterize roughly as political economy and organizational,[92] would suggest two different explanations for why local journalists covered the event as they did. The political economy theory of the media would explain either that the coverage was naturalized because the political implications of the story would have damaged the interests of media owners or their allies, or that it took its shape largely because the commercial imperatives of the news firms led journalists to write for a mass audience that had less interest in the political sociology of the event than in the more sensational elements of the story. The organizational theory would explain that the heat wave story was de-politicized because the internal culture of major news firms is mostly a-political, and that vocational pressures specific to news workers make it unlikely that the social and political dimensions of a story such as the heat wave will figure prominently in news coverage. While both of these theories account for some of the heat wave coverage, neither of them adequately explains the local media's representations of the disaster.

The problem that both conventional theories of media production share is that they fail to recognize that the conditions of journalistic production that determine the content of journalistic work include both the external pressures on the journalistic field from political and economic imperatives, and the internal pressures from the organization of news production.[93] There is a strong relationship between the internal structure of news organizations and the position of the news firms in the broader political economy, and these relations are best conceptualized in a sociology of the media that attends to the connections between external and internal determinants of news production rather than emphasizing one at the expense of the other.

In Chicago, the media reconstructed the heat wave as a naturalized disaster because a complex set of pressures specific to the journalistic field reconfigured the event through the act of journalistic production. Four important conditions of the field best account for the coverage of the event. The first is the commercial nature of the major media, which impels each organization to construct stories that appeal to their markets. Stories must be consumable, which means that they must appeal to common sense, they must deliver to paying readers news that they want to read. In the heat wave, this meant that coverage focused on the spectacular rather than the social features of the event, that the coverage was more narrative than analytical, and that the complex processes

that killed residents were rendered simply. Second, the symbiotic and often personal relationships between journalists (particularly beat reporters who cover local politics) and public officials privileges politicians with unmatched power to explain public events and makes criticism of these officials a risk for reporters, who fear damaging their connections.[94] During the heat wave, public officials used this power to define the event, and even when their statements proved manifestly untrue they had ample opportunity to explain why they had erred and provide alternative explanations for the deaths. Third, journalists themselves are trained to write for their market, and they are unlikely to have any special skills for analyzing a complicated event such as the heat wave or for understanding the sociological structure of the disaster.[95] As increasingly elite professionals, they are also unlikely to have special knowledge of the conditions of urban poverty that were so important in the heat wave. In fact, their social status, training, and work experience make it likely that they will exoticize and misrepresent the low-income neighborhoods.[96] Finally, the routines and pressures of journalistic production, including the short time available for research, reporting, and writing, make it difficult for journalists to establish systematic analyses of disasters such as the heat wave.

The story of the coverage at the *Chicago Tribune*, which provided a considerably more sophisticated view of the heat wave than the major television news programs, illustrates the blend of internal and external or commercial pressures that influenced the heat wave coverage. The *Chicago Tribune*'s reporting of the event began lightly, with journalists writing articles about topics such as how women could remain fashionable in the heat, and printing story leads such as "Stop your whining. So what if it got up to 97 degrees on Wednesday, tying the record. Even though tens of thousands of Chicago-area residents probably suffered through the first day of an anticipated week-long heat wave, for many others, Wednesday's weather was just a walk in the park,"[97] even as the first Chicagoans were dying of the heat. When an editor recognized that the mortality rates were unusually high, he sent a group of reporters into the streets to get descriptions of the death spots, but, he explained, when the bodies started to over-fill the morgue it became clear that "the scene was at the medical examiner's office."[98]

The morgue became a focus of the paper's reporting not because it was the most important aspect of the heat wave, but because it fit the journalists' own profession's criteria for "good copy": it was sensational, dramatic, human, graphic, and therefore visually powerful, unusual,

extreme.[99] Moreover, unlike the scattered deaths in low-income neighborhoods with which most reporters are unfamiliar, the scene at the morgue was centralized and easy to cover: journalists could wait at the morgue and the news – in the form of dead bodies – would come to them. Perhaps most importantly, though, the scene fascinated the reporters themselves. It introduced novelty and excitement into their own work routines and thereby qualified as a major story for the news because it was a major event for the news reporters. Commercially, the mass of dead bodies at the morgue made for an eminently salable spectacle, thereby adding an additional commodity value to the event. Altogether, then, forces specific to the journalistic field turned a socially and politically trivial feature of the heat wave into the symbolic and material center of the event.

If the paper's production team was careful to construct a sensational story of the bodies at the morgue, it was less concerned with explaining the conditions and patterns of the heat wave deaths. It is not that the paper failed to provide information about the demography of the deaths. In fact, unlike all of the other news media, the major newspapers published rough maps of the deaths (albeit arranged only by sociologically meaningless zip codes, and never with connections to the social and economic characteristics of high-death areas) and lists of the names and ages of many of the deceased (albeit not with any adjoining sociological information, such as ethnoracial status or neighborhood). "We didn't do a lot of charts and statistical data," one editor explained, "because we were covering it as a human interest story and a medical science story ... we were looking for good story telling" more than systematic knowledge.[100] But even the most sociologically driven stories failed to provide serious analysis of the deaths, and some of them even distorted the truth of the disaster. The headline of one article about the dead, for example, claimed that "Casualties of Heat Just Like Most of Us: Many Rejected Any Kind of Help," thereby obscuring not only the characteristics of the victims but the processes that killed them. According to one of the copy editors responsible for the headline, they chose it "to broaden the appeal of the article to readers and get them into the story," not because it accurately represented the death trends.[101] Below, the text, which might have clarified the structure of the event, reported that "In the stream of bodies, numbers and questions, the victims of this natural disaster slid quickly into anonymity."[102]

After the heat wave, though, one senior editor who was dissatisfied with the paper's coverage of the disaster used his seniority and his popularity to convince the lead editors of the paper to allow him to organize a team of reporters to do a major story of heat wave victims, one that would provide profiles of their lives and deaths as well as establish a more systematic analysis of the disaster. It would be a huge project, one that was totally unusual for the paper (and possible mostly because of the editor's status). The editor's plan was to use about eight reporters, each of whom he would send into a neighborhood in which there were a large number of deaths, to learn everything they could about the people who died. For the special project, the reporters would be able to break out of the standard conditions of production and to take the time that they otherwise never have to learn and write about the event. The reporting, they hoped, would produce profiles of roughly one-quarter of the dead, which they would use for a major story about the disaster.

The editor got his reporters, and over a three-week period they produced a large number of profiles, although not as many as he had planned. In addition to the profiles, they obtained an exhaustive list of the dead from the medical examiner, which they used to map the deaths, and, although the reporters lacked sociological or statistical training, amidst "a whole lot of numbers and statistics that in themselves reflected certain facets of the heat wave but didn't point to any absolutes,"[103] they discovered that "most of the deaths were in poor areas of the city."[104] With the help of another of the more experienced *Chicago Tribune* editors, a long-standing advocate of civic journalism at the paper, the team developed a standard questionnaire for reporters to use in their interviews about the deceased. They were convinced that they had a major story on their hands, and they wanted to make sure that the reporting for the project would help them see whatever patterns of death there were to find. When the reporting was over, they had a huge amount of information about the victims and they were prepared to write a major piece.

But before they began writing they ran up against the business interests of the paper, which ultimately determine whether a story is newsworthy. "By the time we got done [reporting]," one reporter recalls, "it was September, and it was a very serious decision as to whether people were still interested in this story." Originally supportive of the project, the editors now worried that the story would not work. "There was a perception that our readers didn't care.... When it starts to become fall

or winter in Chicago how many people are going to read about a summer thing?"[105] Ultimately, the top editors decided that not many of them would. Despite the large amount of resources they had committed to the project, they decided that rather than printing the major story they had planned they should run only a short narrative about the deaths followed by about eleven short vignettes about individuals who died. The final story, which was based on a draft that was never finished because the author was on vacation, contained no systematic analysis of the deaths and showed little evidence of the extensive reporting that went into it.[106] Off the record, one editor reported being "extremely disappointed" with the final product. "We could have had a fantastic story,"[107] a reporter lamented, but good reporting and a deadly crisis of historical proportion were not enough to make the news valuable.

The heat is off: The everyday state of urban emergency

Two weeks after the deadly heat wave the weather challenged the city again. On July 29 another heat wave, less severe than the first in both intensity and duration, moved into Chicago, but this time local officials implemented and executed an emergency plan powerful enough to stem the damage. Contradicting its own public position that the government cannot take responsibility for securing the health and welfare of its citizens, the city spent several million dollars a day on emergency services: it opened seventy cooling centers and extended hours at beaches and public pools; assigned five times more senior police units and state employees to check on seniors than it did during the first heat wave, and sent public health officials to nursing homes; developed a system for coordinating emergency health care services; brought in a staff of nearly two-hundred to contact the vulnerable residents it could identity by phone and opened emergency lines to handle calls about the heat; and worked with local media to broadcast heat emergency warnings, encourage families and neighbors to check on one another, issue instructions on how to "beat the heat," and list procedures for handling heat-related illnesses. There is no telling how many lives these programs saved, but after the second heat wave abated the city reported only two heat-related deaths, a decrease in mortality that suggests not only how effective the state can be when it works actively to secure the health of its residents, but also the extent to which the deaths in the first heat wave were politically over-determined. Of course, the response to the second heat wave was exceptionally strong only because local officials

feared a reprise of the disaster that, at two weeks old, remained in their memories. Without this unusual condition it is unlikely that the city government would provide the resources necessary to overcome the state of poverty and fear that endangers Chicago's residents or the poverty of the state that renders its everyday social supports so insufficient.

By the summer of 1996 the city was even better prepared for such catastrophes: pamphlets about heat risks were everywhere in the city and the media broadcast public warnings often; the local government established a registration system allowing any Chicagoan to request phone or personal contact during all weather-related emergencies and even maintained a World Wide Web site devoted exclusively to the threat of heat;[108] the Department of Public Health was working to develop a system for coordinating emergency medical services and the Department on Aging was expanding its network of vulnerable seniors and using its impressive number of senior community centers to educate participants about seasonal survival strategies. Chicago has at least learned how to handle the heat during isolated emergencies, and it is unlikely that another heat wave will prove so disastrous for the city again. Will something else?

It seems likely, if only because a jubilant discourse of local prosperity and urban revitalization has taken hold of the city, rendering the extreme poverty of the most marginalized areas all the more invisible precisely at the moment when welfare "reform" pulls the meager safety net from beneath the poor. The irony of Chicago's elaborate heat emergency plan is that, although it enables the state to treat the symptoms of future weather disasters, its neglect of the built environmental and morphological conditions that create such dangerous urban life all but ensures that the everyday crisis, the slow death, the normalization of collective insecurity in the most impoverished and stigmatized neighborhoods will continue. Adept when it comes to handling the heat, the city government is far less capable of dealing with the poverty, isolation, and insecurity that make the weather so dangerous.

The heat wave is now becoming a central part of Chicago folk-lore,[109] but much of the popular discourse on the event lacks the insights into the structure of the city that the disaster might have exposed. If the heat wave's mythical obituary conceals the very processes that produced its effects, though, the story of its largest funeral speaks its deepest truth. For far from being "the great equalizer," the deaths of

the Chicagoans for whom no one cared only reinforced and made permanent the degradation of their lives.[110] At the end of August, 1995, over a month after the week of death had passed, the bodies of forty-one heat wave victims remained unclaimed at the morgue, leaving the city to care for them. On August 25, Chicago buried these neglected corpses, along with twenty-seven other unclaimed bodies in the city, in a row of plywood boxes marked only by medical case numbers and yellow paper tags tacked onto the side. A Catholic priest who helped officiate the funeral – which was so brief that two of the ministers invited to participate arrived minutes late and missed it entirely – found the discordance of the gruesome event in a city brimming with pride and anticipating renewed international praise too much to bear. "You always hear about mass burials around the world, in war and disaster," he lamented. "And this was home. This was Chicago." Yet there was no one, save a few reporters and a smattering of curious bystanders, to witness the city dispose of the remains, and now they have settled into the earth without stirring up much attention at all. The large grave, which is over 160 feet long, has no tombstone, no sign, nothing to show that the bodies buried therein testify to the expendability of life on the margins of a major American metropolis at the close of the millennium. For the city, the presence of the mass, anonymous grave matters little: almost no one is interested in a reminder of what is otherwise so easy to forget.

Acknowledgments

A large group of friends and colleagues have helped me not only to analyze the disaster, but also to alleviate the human difficulties of researching and writing about an event as traumatic as the heat wave. Foremost among them are the numerous Chicagoans, from all areas and institutions in the city, who shared with me their experiences in and thoughts about the disaster. I thank them for their countless contributions to the study. This article, and the larger project on deprivation in Chicago from which it stems, is much stronger thanks to the comments and suggestions of Manuel Castells, Kimberly McClain DaCosta, Barbara Epstein, Claude Fischer, Sam Kaplan, Michael Rogin, Martín Sanchez-Jankowski, Jillian Sandell, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Margaret Weir, and Kate Zaloom. A special note of gratitude goes to Loïc J. D. Wacquant, who has taught me the principles of sociological vision that guide this research and has supported this project – with remarkable energy and enthusiasm – at every stage of its development. I also thank

the *Theory and Society* Editor whose extensive comments pushed me to clarify many points in the analysis, and Suzanne Lagershausen, who helped make the maps. The research has been supported by the Jacob Javits fellowship program of the U.S. Department of Education, a National Science Foundation graduate fellowship, and a research grant from the Humanities Division of the University of California, Berkeley.

Notes

1. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Heat-Related Illnesses and Deaths – United States, 1994–1995," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 44/25 (1995): 465–468.
2. The heat index measures both temperature and humidity, which together determine how a typical person experiences the heat. It is analogous to the wind-chill factor, which measures experienced cold during the winter. Scientists have long associated high temperatures in cities with the urban "heat island" phenomenon, but only recently have some environmental scientists found that much of the modern warming of the earth takes place at night.
3. Excess death rates measure the number of deaths for a given period of time in relation to the baseline death rate. The Chicago Department of Public Health reported 739 excess deaths during the week of the heat wave, 696 excess deaths for the month of July. Note furthermore that Chicago's mortality rates did not dip in the months following the heat wave; the heat, then, did not (as some initially conjectured) simply kill people who would have died soon thereafter anyway. According to Whitman and his colleagues, heat-related death rates measure the absolute number of cases in which examiners attributed mortality to one of these criteria: "1) a measured body temperature of $>105°F$ ($>40.6°C$) before or immediately after death; 2) evidence of high environmental temperature at the scene of death, usually greater than 100°F; or 3) the body was decomposed and investigation disclosed that the person was last seen alive during the heat wave and that the environmental temperature at the time would have been high." Steven Whitman et al., "Mortality in Chicago Attributed to the July 1995 Heat Wave," *American Journal of Public Health* 87/9 (September, 1997): 1515–1518.
4. Here I use "logic" to refer to the structure and course of the disaster as well as to the social order of the city, since it is the latter that largely determined the former.
5. Among the major statements in this discussion are Peter Marcuse, "What's So New About Divided Cities?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17/3 (1993): 355–365; Peter Marcuse, "The Enclave, the Citadel, and the Ghetto: What Has Changed in the Post-Fordist U.S. City," *Urban Affairs Review* 33/2 (1997): 228–264; Loïc J. D. Wacquant, "The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on its Nature and Implications," *Acta Sociologica* 39 (1996): 121–139; Douglas Massey, "The Age of Extremes: Concentrated Affluence and Poverty in the Twenty-First Century," *Demography* 33/4 (1996): 395–412; and Manuel Castells, *End of Millennium* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
6. There are several reasons to think that these conditions are not unique to Chicago, and in fact the heat wave provided some of them. Milwaukee, about one-hundred

miles away, experienced 91 heat-related deaths during the week. As in Chicago, this mortality level cannot be explained by the heat alone.

7. Whitman et al., "Mortality in Chicago Attributed to the July 1995 Heat Wave," 1517.
8. City of Chicago, *Mayor's Commission on Extreme Weather Conditions* (November, 1995).
9. See the list of participants in the *Mayor's Commission on Extreme Weather Conditions*, 38.
10. The most significant and impressive scholarly study of the heat wave, authored by a team of researchers from such prestigious public health research centers as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Epidemic Intelligence Service and published in the July 11, 1995 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, clarifies many of the crucial public health lessons from the event but does little to show the social and political processes that made some areas of the city more vulnerable than others. The well-funded case-control study, conducted by a large team of researchers, matches 339 relatives, neighbors, or friends of heat wave victims with 330 controls according to neighborhood and age to determine the major risk factors for dying during a heat wave. The results of the study are important for helping public health workers and policy makers identify and assist vulnerable populations: they found that there were fewer deaths among people who had a working air conditioner, access to an air-conditioned lobby, or ability to visit another place with air conditioning; and a higher risk of deaths among people who lived alone, on the top floor of a building, in apartment houses, in single room occupancy dwellings, in homes with a small number of rooms, who had less access to public transportation, and who were socially isolated. The study, which opens with the claim that "Hot summer weather cannot be prevented; however, morbidity and mortality related to summer heat can be reduced," no doubt makes a great contribution to the effort to achieve this. What it does not do, though, is illustrate the conditions that make communities, rather than individuals, susceptible to health disasters. In focusing on individuals and finding controls for each subject within his or her own neighborhood, the authors of the study provide only a partial analysis of the heat wave's effects. Their methodological approach leaves the differences between "community areas" invisible, displaces social inequality from the center of the story, and shows only implicitly the relationships among poverty, race, neighborhood conditions, political power, and death. See Jan Semenza et al., "Heat-Related Deaths During the July 1995 Heat Wave in Chicago," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 335/2 (1996): 84–90.
11. In this article, I draw upon several months of field work in Chicago; over forty interviews with city residents, public officials, social service providers, and journalists who covered the disaster; statistical studies and reports from the census, the Chicago and Illinois Departments of Public Health as well as from the Cook County Office of the Medical Examiner; a survey of television and newspaper accounts of the week; and historical studies of the city's low-income neighborhood to analyze the heat wave deaths.
12. As the Chicago Public Health Department study notes, the less dangerous weather does not alone account for the differences in mortality rates. The new forms of marginality I discuss, however, had become more severe by 1995 than they were in the 1980s, when the isolation of seniors (see discussion below, especially the analysis of senior public housing), the changes in the public health system (especially the privatization of service providers), the density of poverty, and the rate of homelessness, which in turn changed the environment in the hotel residences (see

below), had not reached the levels that they would by 1995. See Massey, "The Age of Extremes: Concentrated Affluence and Poverty in the Twenty-First Century," and Wacquant, "The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on its Nature and Implications."

13. The most widely known sociological account of a disaster, Kai Erikson, *Everyting in Its Path: the Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), points toward but does not establish the structure of vulnerability that determined the deaths from the Buffalo Creek flood. Erikson's more recent book is more explicit about the importance of vulnerability in disasters, but again it focuses on the experience of disasters and does not systematically establish the human precariousness that makes them so damaging. Kai Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters* (New York: WW Norton, 1994).
14. Perhaps the most familiar case in which the political economy and structural morphology of vulnerability determined disaster mortality is the Titanic accident. First class passengers, whose wealth allowed them to obtain positions at the higher (and in this case safer) levels of the ship and gave them priority in the rescue, survived at a much higher rate than passengers seated in lower class positions. Passengers with the lowest class tickets suffered the highest mortality rates. Yet wealth does not always protect against disaster damage. Note, for example, that earthquakes in modern cities might be most disastrous for wealthy home-owners who accept the risk of building expensive homes on mountain cliffs, or that forest fires might affect only residents wealthy enough to build homes in expensive, greener areas, such as the Oakland and Berkeley hills. In these crises, however, the order of assistance, organization, and reconstruction is often determined by the wealth and political power of the communities affected: more elite areas are rebuilt and repaired much more quickly than disadvantaged areas. See William Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature," *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York, NY: WW Norton, 1995).
15. See Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1951); and Marcel Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of a Person, the Notion of a Self."
16. Durkheim, *Suicide*, 105–121, see especially 107–111; Mauss, *Seasonal Variation of the Eskimo.*
17. Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of a Person, the Notion of a Self," reprinted in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes, editors, *The Category of the Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–25.
18. Robert Park, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment," reprinted in Richard Sennett, editor, *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), 130.
19. For a theoretical appraisal of the Chicago school, see Andrew Abbott, "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School," *Social Forces* 75/4 (1997): 1149–1182; Ulf Hannerz, *Exploring the City* (New York: Columbia, 1980).
20. For a useful overview of the political economy paradigm, see John Walton, "Urban Sociology: The Limits and Contributions of Political Economy." *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 301–320.
21. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 112.
22. For his most recent analysis of the hidden effects of the state, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996).

23. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur la Télévision* (Paris: Liber Editions, 1996); the collection of essays on the media in Pierre Bourdieu, editor, *La Misere du Monde* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1993); Patrick Champagne, *Faire L'Opinion* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1990); Serge Halimi, *Les Nouveaux Chiens du Garde* (Paris: Liber Editions, 1997); and the special edition of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 101–102, (1994), which is devoted to the journalistic field.
24. See Andrew Szasz and Michael Meuser, "Environmental Inequalities: Literature Review and Proposals for New Directions in Research and Theory," *Current Sociology* 45/3 (1997): 99–120.
25. Major early statements of this positions include US General Accounting Office, *Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities*, GAO/RCED–85–75 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983); Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites* (New York: Public Data Access, 1987); for a more recent sociological study, see Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); and for overviews of the literature, see Szazs and Meuser (1997); Racquel Pinderhughes, "The Impact of Race on Environmental Quality: an Empirical and Theoretical Discussion." *Sociological Perspectives* 39/2 (1996): 231–239; and Eric Klinenberg, "La Gauche Américaine Découvre la 'Justice Ecologique,'" *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February, 1998.
26. Historian William Cronon has noted the possibility of doing this kind of work. He argues that "Every environmental disaster, all the way up to global warming, stands as a potential indictment of the ignorant or culpable human actions that contributed to it." William Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature."
27. See Wacquant, "The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on its Nature and Implications,"and Castells, *End of Millennium*.
28. Thomas Noguchi and Joseph DiMona, *Coroner at Large* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).
29. *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1996, A17.
30. U.S. Centers for Disease Control, "Heat-Related Mortality – Chicago, 1995."
31. *The Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1995, p. (2)5.
32. Chicago's concept of a "community area" was established more than fifty years ago through the work of the Social Sciences Research Committee of the University of Chicago, with the cooperation of local agencies and the United States Bureau of Census. According to the authors of the *Local Community Fact Book*, the community areas were originally drawn on the basis of consideration such as: "(1) the settlement, growth, and history of the area: (2) local identification with the area: (3) the local trade area; (4) distribution and membership of local institutions; and (5) natural and artificial barriers such as the Chicago River and its branches, railroad lines, local transportation systems, and parks and boulevards." The community areas do not correspond precisely with Chicago's neighborhood and community structure. In fact they are artificial constructions of social scientists and bureaucrats more than they are organic categories known and used by city residents. Community areas are useful for comparing areas of the city mostly because statistical data for them goes back several decades and allows for comparative and historical analysis, and because census track data are sometimes too small to reveal trends and tendencies in aggregated communities. There are now 77 com-

munity areas in the City of Chicago, with 1990 populations ranging from 6,828 (Near South Side) to 114, 079 (Austin), and averaging around 36,000.

33. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 (1945)); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Thomas Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1978); William Kornblum, *Blue-Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Gerald Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum; Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
34. See Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto.*
35. See Tiefu Shen et al., "Executive Summary: Community Characteristics Correlated with Heat Related Mortality, Chicago, Illinois, July, 1995," unpublished manuscript.
36. Public health researchers often use census-level data for their studies, but in Chicago it is conventional to use community areas as standard units of measurement and the published studies of the heat wave have been based on community area data.
37. See Steven Whitman, "Mortality and the Mid-July Heat Wave in Chicago," presentation to the Chicago Board of Health (September 20, 1995); and Whitman et al., "Mortality in Chicago Attributed to the July 1995 Heat Wave."
38. See, for example, the articles collected in George Peterson and Carol Lewis, *Reagan and the Cities* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1986).
39. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce study of the heat wave, "City officials had neither the experience nor emergency response capabilities to translate the physical characteristics of the heat wave into human impact ... While public health officials made efforts to mitigate the impact of the heat wave within their communities, neither [Milwakee or Chicago] was prepared to respond to the heat emergency as a city-wide disaster." U.S. Department of Commerce, *National Disaster Survey Report: July 1995 Heat Wave* (Silver Spring, Maryland: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996), viii–ix.
40. See Charles Perrow and Mario Guillén, *The Aids Disaster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), for a discussion of the ways in which the least politically powerful people with AIDS, poor people of color who were intravenous drug users, were neglected by the organizations who managed the AIDS crisis. Perrow and Guillen affirm a central claim of urban regime scholars, that lack of resources makes poor and minority communities least able to mobilize the government to support their needs, thus triggering a vicious cycle in which they are deprived further and made even more politically expendable. For statements of this position from urban regime theorists, see, among others, Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946–1988*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989); and Steven Elkin, *City and Regime in the American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
41. City of Chicago, *Mayor's Commission on Extreme Weather Conditions.*
42. Robin Hambleton, "Future Directions for Urban Government in Britain and America," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 12/1 (1990): 75–94.
43. On the rise of decentralization and private sector management techniques in local governments, see Hambleton, "Future Directions for Urban Government in Britain and America."
44. "Illinois Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee. Report of the Heat Related Deaths in Cook County," (November, 1995), 3–4.

45. City of Chicago, *Mayor's Commission on Extreme Weather Conditions*, 4.
46. Interviews with social workers, Metropolitan Family Services, June 1996; and M. Fleming-Moran et al., *Illinois State Needs Assessment Survey of Elders Aged 55 and Over* (Bloomington: Heartland Center on Aging, Disability and Long Term Care, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, 1991).
47. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 60.
48. Wilson's use of social isolation is troubling because he employs it to refer to a set of *social relations* that sociologists can only understand by engaging in ethnographic or detailed survey work, but his conception is in fact a derivation of the *spatial relations* for which his 1987 book has evidence. "Social isolation," in this formulation, is descriptively inaccurate, as it actually means social contact with the wrong people. Moreover, Wilson does not provide empirical evidence to show that isolation from "mainstream society," as distinct from spatial segregation by race or class, state retrenchment, or corporate abandonment, is responsible for the decline of work in the low-income black communities he studies.
49. Shen, Tiefu, et al., "Executive Summary: Community Characteristics Correlated with Heat Related Mortality, Chicago, Illinois, July, 1995."
50. See Elijah Anderson, "The Code of the Streets," *Atlantic Monthly* 273/3 (1994): 80–94.
51. See William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996); John Betancur, "The Settlement Experience of Latinos in Chicago: Segregation, Speculation, and the Ecology Model," *Social Forces* 74/4 (1996): 1299–1324; Carloz Velez-Ibanez, "U.S. Mexicans in the Borderlands: Being Poor without the Underclass." In Joan Moore and Raquel Penderhughes, editors, *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass* (New York: Russell Sage, 1993); Felix Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Susan Keefe and Amado Padilla, *Chicano Ethnicity* (Albequerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).
52. See Betancur, "The Settlement Experience of Latinos in Chicago: Segregation, Speculation, and the Ecology Model," and Padilla, *Puerto Rican Chicago.*
53. See Alejandro Portes and Doug Macleod, "What Shall I Call Myself? Hispanic Identity Formation in the Second Generation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19/3 (1996), for an illustration of the sociological vacuousness of the category, "Hispanic."
54. The first three parts of this scheme rely heavily on Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez's work on low-income Mexican Americans in the borderlands, which provides a model against which urban ethnographers can compare their own findings on other communities.
55. See Moore and Pinderhughes, *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass.*
56. See William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor.*
57. The density of poverty, Douglas Massey argues in "The Age of Extremes: Concentrated Affluence and Poverty in the Twenty-First Century," matters because "as the density of poverty rises in the environment of the world's poor, so will their exposure to crime, disease, violence, and family disruption." In another article, Massey shows that the density of poverty has an especially powerful effect on crime rates. According to his estimates, every one point increase in the neighborhood rate of poverty raises the major crime rate by 0.8 points. See Douglas Massey, "Getting Away with Murder: Segregation and Violent Crime in Urban

America," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 143 (1995): 1203–1232. Massey also cites a study that uses Columbus, Ohio data to show that the violent crime rate for neighborhoods with a poverty rate of over 40 percent is over three times higher than it is in neighborhoods with a poverty rate below 20 percent. See Laurence Krivo and Ruth Peterson, "Extremely Disadvantaged Neighborhoods and Urban Crime," *Social Forces* 75/2 (1996): 619–650.

58. For the classic discussion of the politics of neighborhood identification and identity construction, see Albert Hunter, *Symbolic Communities: The Persistence and Change of Chicago's Local Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). According to Hunter and Gerald Suttles, "Residential identities ... are imbedded in a contrastive structure in which each neighborhood is known primarily as a counterpart to some of the others." Quoted in John Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
59. For classic statements of how street life is the vital link in social networks and the source of community animation, see Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, and Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).
60. The abundance of such visible markings supports Logan and Molotch's argument that the contrastive structure of neighborhoods "means that community resources are desired not just to secure better material conditions, like nice parks, but to display success compared to other neighborhoods seeking the same resources.... [I]t is – in a competitive market society – also a way of gaining access to other rewards by establishing one's credentials, by demonstrating that one comes from a good place." Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, 107–108.
61. The description here is based on observation as well as the neighborhood summary listed in *The Chicago Community Fact Book*, 110.
62. The degradation of street life in North Lawndale also represents a change from the sociological account of Chicago's African-American neighborhoods in *Black Metropolis*, where Drake and Cayton describe an active public sphere. According to Wacquant, the most degraded neighborhoods in both the United States and France have changed "from communal 'places' suffused with shared emotions, joint meanings and practices and institutions of mutuality, to indifferent 'spaces' of mere survival and contest." Wacquant, "The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on its Nature and Implications."
63. Loïc J. D. Wacquant and William Julius Wilson, "Poverty, Joblessness, and the Social Transformation of the Inner City," in *Reforming Welfare Policy*, edited by David Ellwood and P. Cottingham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 91.
64. See *Chicago Fact Book Consorium*, 107; and Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto*, 185.
65. This change in the social life of poor communities is all the more disastrous because, as Logan and Molotch argue, the informal exchange of services and assistance on which poor communities depend is "made possible only by a viable community," and "poor people's use values are particularly damaged when their neighborhood is disrupted." Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*.
66. See Laurie Kaye Abraham, *Mama Might be Better off Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
67. See Loïc J. D. Wacquant, "The New Urban Color Line: The State and Fate of the Ghetto in PostFordist American," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994).

68. For the most thorough historical account of hotel residences, see Paul Groth, *Living Downtown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For a recent study of SROs in Chicago, see Charles Hoch and Robert Slayton, *New Homeless and Old: Community and the Skid Row Hotel* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
69. Groth, *Living Downtown*, 9–10.
70. Groth, *Living Downtown*, 287–290.
71. The conditions in the worst SROs resemble the "cattle-sheds for human beings" described by Frederick Engels. Engels's remark that "such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world," has an ironic resonance for the case of Chicago, America's own "second city" and historical manufacturing center. See Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1984).
72. In the SRO population census they conducted in 1984, Hoch and Slayton found that 38 percent of SRO residents had serious illnesses, but only 42 percent had health insurance. Hoch and Slayton, 127, 134.
73. As the city attracts attention for redeveloping Cabrini-Green, the downtown public housing complex with the most potential to be converted into valuable real estate, thousands of city residents living in unsafe conditions will remain neglected.
74. Interviews with Chicago journalists.
75. *Chicago Sun Times*, July 25, 1995: 25.
76. *Chicago Tribune*, July 25, 1995: (7) 1.
77. *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1995: 1; and *Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 1995: A1.
78. *New York Times*, July 21, 1995: IV, 2.
79. *Chicago Sun Times*, July 25, 1995: 25; *The Washington Post*, August 26, 1995: A1; and *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1995: (2) 4.
80. *Metro Senior*, No. 93, September-October, 1995; *Chicago Sun Times*, July 18, 1995, 1; *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1995: (2) 4.
81. It is important to note that most environmental scientists would, in fact, challenge even the argument that the government, as well as corporations, cannot be held responsible for the heat on the grounds that global warming has produced not only a gradual elevation of the earth temperature but hotter heat waves, more severe droughts, and stronger storm systems. According to a U.S. Government study directed by a member of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, there is a 90 to 95 percent likelihood that the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide is responsible for the increased incidence of extreme precipitation, over-all precipitation, and above-normal temperatures in many areas of the country from 1980 to 1994. Thomas Karl, leader of the research team at the National Climatic Data Center confirms this in his report that "we seem to be getting these storms of the century every couple of years." These and other scientific studies show that in an era of massive environmental destruction not even the weather is natural, and that government policies toward corporate and private pollution have helped produce the hazardous weather systems that promise to return with greater frequency in the future. See *The New York Times*, September 18, 1995: A1, and January 14, 1996: (4) 4.
82. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974), 22.
83. Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974): 109–110.
84. According to my informants in the local press, many journalists, however, believed

the mayor's misleading claims about the deaths even after the medical examiner made his medical attributions.

85. In the rare cases when this frame broke down, the dominant secondary frame – again established by local officials – was what Goffman calls the frame of "fortuitousness," that is, when "An individual [or group], properly guiding his doings, meets with the natural workings of the world in a way he could not be expected to anticipate, with consequential results." Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 33. As I noted above, public health officials have long been aware of the risk factors for heat wave deaths as well as of the programs that they can employ to reduce these risks. Yet local officials worked hard to argue that no one could have expected such a strong heat wave (or that it could not be responsible for the heat) and that the state's response was proper. The history of the event thus supports Goffman's argument that the cultural notion of fortuitousness enables "the citizenry to come to terms with events that would otherwise be an embarrassment to its system of analysis," albeit with the important addition that the state is the key agent in the production of this frame. *Frame Analysis*, 35.
86. For a thorough discussion of Bilandic's electoral loss to Jane Byrne, see Paul Kleppner, *Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), chapter 5.
87. Some stores and businesses that lost their electricity, particularly those that stocked frozen perishables, and local agriculture were more damaged by the heat wave. Nonetheless, the overall effect of the heat wave on business was less severe than the blizzard.
88. For the best historical account of how business and commercial interests established Chicago's built environment, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: WW Norton, 1991).
89. *Metro Senior,* No. 93: 1–4.
90. See, among others, Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), and Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).
91. Newspapers, more than other media, tend to publish a broad set of positions on political and social matters, many of which contrast and conflict with one another. Daily papers do this in part because they produce quantitatively more news than other news media and they have sufficient space and staff to express several kinds of analysis and description; and also because they are more open than other media, particularly more than television, to the contributions of people outside the firm. These contributions generally take the form of editorial pieces, which are prominent parts of the paper, but they may also come in the form of news articles from free-lance reporters. During the heat wave, the local papers did present a broader range of coverage than the other local media.
92. For the most known analysis of the political economy of news production, see Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); see also Phillip Schlesinger, "From Production to Propaganda?" *Media, Culture, and Society* II (1989): 283–306. For the best organizational study of the news, see Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: The Free Press, 1979). Gans claims that most journalists in the major media he studied were apolitical, or at least not politically driven. For other major organizational studies of the news, see William Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* (May 1955): 326–335; Lee Sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 79/1 (1973): 132–151;

and Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objctivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77/4 (1972): 660–679. Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," *Media, Culture, and Society* 11 (1989): 263–282, discusses the weaknesses of the distinct approaches to the media, but he does not go so far as to suggest methods for integrating them.

93. The problem with organizational studies of media production is that the explanation for why journalists report the news the way that they do does not lie completely within the news firms themselves. News reporting, and the journalistic field in general, is deeply affected by the broader social, political, and economic context in which it is located. Failing to recognize this is to fall victim to the *internalist fallacy*, a trap into which cultural analysts often slip, which political economists and structuralis social scientists often cite as the fatal myopia of ethnographic research and organizational studies of the media. On the other hand, more structuralist accounts of media production often fail to recognize that forces outside the journalistic field affect action in the field only through mediating forces internal to the field itself. Claiming that news content, for example, is determined by conditions in the field of the state or the economic field, is to commit the *short-circuit fallacy*, the blindness to the intermediary mechanisms and channels through which forces move from one field to another.
94. See Gans, *Deciding What's News*; Edward Sigal, *Reporters and Officials* (Boston: Heath, 1973); Phyllis Kaniss, *Making Local News* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
95. Kaniss argues that local reporters are particularly incompetent at dealing with numbers and statistical analysis, both of which are essential for establishing patterns of heat wave deaths.
96. For an illustration of this misrepresentation in the French journalistic coverage of the *banlieu*, see Patrick Champagne, "La Vision d'Etat," *La Misère du Monde*; and for a discussion of the tendency to exoticize the ghetto, see Loïc J. D. Wacquant, "Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21/2: 341–353. For the argument that journalists themselves are becoming more elite and professionalized, and therefore less connected to the social lives of average Americans, see James Fallows, *Breaking the News* (New York: Panthon, 1996). In an interview, one of the *Chicago Tribune* journalists who covers urban poverty criticized his colleagues for their weak and inaccurate coverage of poor neighborhoods.
97. *Chicago Tribune*, "If You Can't Stand the Heat, You Must Be Out-of-Towner," July 13, 1995. The headline for the article on fashion in the heat wave read, "Gimme Swelter! It's the Height of the Steamy Season, But the Heat Doesn't have to Sap Your Style. Here's How to Ward off Wardrobe Wilt and Makeup Meltdown."
98. Interview with *Chicago Tribune* editor.
99. See Gans, *Deciding What's News*, and Bourdieu, *Sur la Television*, where Bourdieu argues that journalists often select the details to include in stories not because they are unusual and interesting in general, but because they are compelling for journalists' themselves.
100. Interview with *Chicago Tribune* editor.
101. Interview with *Chicago Tribune* copy editor. Note that the headlines serve as marketing tools to hook readers as well as instruments for emphasizing particular angles or aspects of a story. Copy editors produce them through an economic and aesthetic logic that does not necessarily mirror the logic of the stories themselves.
102. *The Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1995: (2) 1.

103. Interview with reporter.
104. Interview with reporter.
105. Interview with reporter.
106. *The Chicago Tribune*, "The Heat Wave Victims: Joined in Death," November 26, 1995.
107. Interview with reporter.
108. Visit the site at: http://www.ci.chi.us/mayor/HotWeather/
109. "Now and for the rest of our lives," says one member of Chicago's severe-weather commission, "we'll be telling our grandchildren about the summer of 1995. People will be talking about this forever."
110. For an analysis of the social and symbolic significance of funeral rituals and burial conditions, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).