CRIMINOLOGY

# CONTEXTUALIZING COMMUNITY CRIME CONTROL: RACE, GEOGRAPHY, AND CONFIGURATIONS OF CONTROL IN FOUR COMMUNITIES*

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*Criminology and urban sociology have long-standing interests in how neighborhoods and communities respond to and control crime. We build on the literature on social disorganization, collective efficacy, and new parochialism to develop a framework that explains how and why communities respond differently to crime. We draw on more than 2 years of comparative ethnographic data and 56 resident and stakeholder interviews on responses to crime in four communities in two states. We find that the intersections of racial composition, geography, and crime narratives in each place contributed to distinct community responses to crime. By analyzing these dynamics across the four sites, we propose three types of public–parochial partnerships that communities use to respond to crime: public alliances that rely primarily on public forms of control, tentative public–parochial partnerships that rely on tenuous connections with public institutions, and grassroots engagement with public institutions. We explain the emergence of these three approaches as patterned responses rooted in characteristics of local contexts, including racial composition and geographic isolation.*

A vast body of research has sought to understand the role of formal and informal social controls in neighborhood life and local crime-control efforts. According to previous research, internal dynamics captured by concepts such as systemic social control, collective efficacy, new parochialism, and legal cynicism all impact how people control crime in their neighborhoods (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Carr, 2003; Hunter, 1985; Kirk and Papachristos, 2011; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). Connections between neighborhoods and external institutions also affect communities' abilities to control crime (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Vargas, 2014). Yet, not all communities have equal access to external institutions: Differences in racial composition, legal cynicism, levels of geographic isolation, and political dynamics all shape community context and access to external resources and controls. As a result, some communities may be more or less able to engage effectively in different forms of social control.

In this article, we analyze factors that contribute to variation in communities' abilities and willingness to mobilize different types of relationships, networks, and institutions

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for crime control. We draw on comparative ethnographic and interview data from four communities to identify structural dimensions through which communities mobilize public and parochial relationships to respond to crime or the threat of crime. Our analysis is based on data collected for two studies on social control and community responses to crime. The first study focused on how urban communities defined crime and criminals, broadly speaking, and how this was shaped by community context (Leverentz, 2011, 2012); the second examined how and why urban and rural communities responded to sexually violent predator (SVP) placements in their towns (Williams, 2013, 2016). Together, these data allow us to expand existing theories about the processes through which communities and political and legal institutions shape crime-control efforts across demographically and geopolitically different communities. In particular, we identify three types of responses to crime—public alliances, tentative public–parochial partnerships, and grassroots public engagement—that involve an array of formal and informal social control strategies combined with varying levels of trust in the criminal justice system. Our findings show how interactions among race (e.g., neighborhood racial composition and legal cynicism), urban and rural geography, and political and legal institutions shape crime-control efforts across a variety of communities. In doing so, the current study enhances criminological understandings of the factors that contribute to variation in crime-control strategies across communities.

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR ADDRESSING CRIME

Criminologists have long recognized the importance of analyzing places, in addition to people, as a way of understanding variation in crime. One group of theories and concepts examines how internal community dynamics affect crime and crime control in part by affecting their capacity for mobilizing external controls such as law enforcement and political support. Systemic models focus on social network ties to examine the "ecological, institutional, and normative dimensions" of community organization (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974). Hunter (1985) distinguished among three levels of community social control—private, parochial, and public orders—all of which must work together for a community to maintain control (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Hunter, 1985). The parochial order, comprising local interpersonal networks that meet the daily needs of the community, provides mutual aid and community status, and it involves relationships of "limited liability" (Hunter, 1985). These networks are rooted in the unique features of spaces, and they are mutually interdependent with the intimate ties of family and close friends (private orders) and the formal bureaucratic relationships of the state (public orders). According to systemic approaches, socially disorganized neighborhoods lack strong and effective network ties and, as a consequence, lack the capacity to realize common values and maintain effective control (Bursik, 1988; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, 2012). This may reflect a breakdown in the interdependence of different levels of networks, such as in the inability of close-knit communities to connect with broader public forces to prevent urban renewal efforts (Gans, 1982; Granovetter, 1973).

At the same time, strong personal network ties need not be present for effective crime control within communities. Collective efficacy, or the willingness of neighbors to intervene for the common good of the neighborhood based on a sense of mutual trust and cohesion, can be rooted in weak ties and purposeful interactions (Sampson, 2012; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). In fact, neighborhood-level social control

may be stronger in urban neighborhoods with many cross-cutting weak ties, rather than with predominantly strong ties (Browning, 2009; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Sampson, 2012; St. Jean, 2007). Collective efficacy is fairly stable within urban neighborhoods over time, and it has a direct negative association with homicide, robbery, and burglary (Sampson, 2012). Seemingly socially organized neighborhoods may work toward social control by employing what Carr (2005: 146) called *new parochialism* or a "specific, bounded, and secure activism" that allows residents to self-regulate by engaging in social control activities facilitated by public actors. These crime-control efforts involve relationships of limited liability, minimal time commitments, and the mobilization of parochial and public controls such as neighborhood watch groups or city bureaucracy (Carr, 2005; Hunter, 1985).

Although ties among neighbors are important, ties among residents, nonprofit social organizations, and formal institutions also play a key role in determining the effectiveness of efforts to control crime. Vargas's (2014) examination of crime across blocks in Chicago's Little Village pointed to the role of broader external forces in neighborhood crime-control efforts. He found that law enforcement practices, such as the arrest of high-profile offenders, can disrupt the social organization of urban neighborhoods, changing crime dynamics for better or for worse. Furthermore, competition for political power and program funding across blocks within the same neighborhood can impede community crime control and shape strategies of law enforcement and nonprofit organizations (Carr, 2005; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Vargas, 2016). Similarly, urban political economists have demonstrated that extralocal factors such as economic and political forces in the cities, counties, and regions in which neighborhoods are embedded impact their abilities to control crime (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Sampson, 2012; Sampson and Wilson, 1995).

Other external factors that have been shown to impact a community's capacity to engage in crime control include cultural narratives about crime that increase levels of fear and the visibility of crime as a social issue, as well as broader neighborhood characteristics such as high unemployment rates among neighborhood adults, demographic changes, residential turnover, and increasing racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Carr, 2005; Leverentz, 2012; Merry, 1981; Park, Burgess, and MacKenzie, 1925; Putnam, 2000; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997), all of which may impede informal social control efforts and decrease trust in external institutions to aid in local crime-control efforts. St. Jean's (2007) ethnographic work with active offenders in Grand Boulevard in Chicago supported these ideas: He found that ecological disadvantages, close ties between offenders and neighbors, and fear among residents helped explain crime hot spots.

Vargas (2016) emphasized the additional need to consider political ecometrics, or measures of political spaces within neighborhoods, to explain crime control. Gerrymandering, relationships between city and ward officials, and other political factors can shape neighborhood inequality and social organization, making it more difficult for some neighborhoods to connect with and trust law enforcement and other government agencies. For instance, although Carr's Beltway was populated by civil servants and others who had mobilized and could continue to mobilize connections to the police and city government (Carr, 2005), parts of Little Village were embedded in battles over political power and law enforcement efforts to suppress gangs, which created opportunities for other gangs to engage in turf battles while residents lived in fear of both gangs and the police (Vargas, 2016).

These dynamics may contribute to residents' legal cynicism or the belief that law enforcement and the criminal justice system do not work for them and are illegitimate and ill

equipped to provide public safety (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011; Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). Neighborhoods with higher levels of disadvantage experience higher levels of legal cynicism and greater tolerance of deviance even while their residents are less tolerant of deviance on an individual level (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). Residents in neighborhoods characterized by high levels of legal cynicism may begin to feel that they must fend for themselves without the police or other forms of formal social control (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011). In some disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, interactions between agents of formal social control and residents have contributed to a lack of trust in the courts or the police to act in their interests, which may increase violence or unwillingness to work with the police (Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, 2007; Kirk and Papachristos, 2011; Warner, 2007; Weitzer and Brunson, 2009). Collective efficacy and new parochialism may be less likely to take hold in these neighborhoods because community members perceive efforts to bolster engagement with formal social controls as disingenuous at best and as nefarious at worst.

Overall, recent studies of variation in communities' capacities for controlling crime have suggested that differences in internal and external community dynamics affect the types and effectiveness of crime-control strategies that they employ. Although these studies have focused on different aspects of local contexts, a key theme throughout them all is that race and place interact to shape crime-control strategies. Although on the surface partnerships between parochial-level ties and formal institutions sound like a viable response to crime in a contemporary context of limited private ties, public–parochial relationships may be less effective in communities of color and in other communities with limited or strained connections to formal institutions. In the next section, we discuss key findings in this area before turning to the current study.

## RACE, GEOGRAPHY, AND CRIME-CONTROL EFFORTS

Many previous studies have demonstrated the racialized nature of urban residents' experiences with and responses to crime and social control (Browning, 2009; Carr, 2005; Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, 2007; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Vargas, 2016). Those who can may use their connections to control certain people or areas, as suggested by both Becker (2014) and Leverentz (2012), who found strongly racialized crime narratives in White-dominated communities that perpetuated stereotypes of the "criminalblackman" (Russell-Brown, 1998) who victimizes the innocent, vulnerable White woman. As Carr (2005: 10–11) noted, "After all, simply theorizing that it is good for citizens to informally control crime and disorder glosses over the possibility that what may pass for informal social control may in fact be a persecution of those who are different from the majority." Indeed, the same narratives about crime and criminals, such as concern about young men of color engaging in violence and gang activity, play out differently in different local contexts. For example, in the predominantly White Beltway, narratives of crime encouraged fear of and assigning blame to Black and Latino residents who were moving into the area (Carr, 2005; Kefalas, 2003); nevertheless, in predominantly middle-class and African American Groveland, residents often found themselves simultaneously threatened by and reliant on gang members who had the potential for causing and controlling crime in their neighborhoods (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Venkatesh (2000), St. Jean (2007), and Vargas (2016) reported similar dynamics in their studies of predominantly Black and Latino Chicago neighborhoods.

Studies using both survey and ethnographic data have provided further evidence for racialized place-based variation in understandings of disorder, crime, and offenders. All racial groups perceive heightened social and physical disorder as the concentration of minority groups in an area increases (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004), but Whites may be more affected by neighborhood racial composition than non-Whites, perceiving higher levels of victimization risk in communities of color (Quillian and Pager, 2010). Similarly, Chiricos and colleagues found that the perception that Hispanics or Blacks lived nearby increased perceived risk of victimization but only among those who were a minority in the area (Chiricos, McEntire, and Gertz, 2001). Perceptions of disorder may be rooted in historical assessments, rather than in current cues, suggesting the importance of reputational processes (Sampson, 2012). These cues also may be interpreted differently depending on one's knowledge of the neighborhood and role in neighborhood life. For example, drug dealers in Chicago's Grand Boulevard took signs of disorder as signals that *city government* did not care about the neighborhood, not that residents did not care (St. Jean, 2007).

Although many studies of race and crime have focused on urban areas, geography also may impact communities' crime-control strategies. Rural communities can have strong internal ties (Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells, 2005), but they also may have more difficulty creating public–parochial partnerships because of their physical distance from institutional actors. Studies of rural communities' responses to crime and criminals have suggested that their unique geography shapes when and how community members access and mobilize connections to law enforcement (Garriott, 2011; Williams, 2013; Yarwood, 2015). The intersection of racial composition with a community's level of urbanicity also may influence a community's ability to mobilize public controls. Just as in urban areas, public actors and organizations may perceive predominantly White rural communities as less threatening and more deserving of help than rural communities composed of other racial and ethnic groups.

## THE CURRENT STUDY

The extant literature has highlighted the importance of accounting for local context when explaining how and why communities differ in their crime-control strategies. The current study is uniquely positioned to expand criminological understandings of variation in crime control across communities for at least three reasons. First, most research on neighborhood crime control focuses on a single neighborhood or neighborhoods within a single city. By contrast, we compare crime-control efforts in four communities in two states, all of which are situated in different political and legal contexts. Our comparative study allows for examining crime control in a diverse collection of communities that have varying relationships with local political and legal institutions.

Second, we compare responses to different types of crime in these four communities. Two communities tried primarily to address ongoing gang and drug-related violence, whereas the other two communities responded to an attempted placement of a sexually violent predator in their communities. Finally, those who have previously studied crime-control strategies in communities have generally focused on urban neighborhoods. This focus truncates a full understanding of the processes by which crime-control strategies emerge in communities. Because our study aims to compare these processes across a wider range of places, we include a rural town as one of our cases. By comparing urban and rural communities, we can extend theories about how communities'

**Table 1. Research Sites**

| Variables | Factory Town | Urban Hub | East City | Deserton |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of Area | | | | |
| City (urban) | x | | x | |
| Neighborhood (urban) | | x | | |
| Unincorporated town (rural) | | | | x |
| Crime Concern | | | | |
| Chronic violence | x | x | x | |
| SVP placement | | | x | x |
| Crime Rate | | | | |
| Low | | | | x |
| High | x | x | x | |
| Racial Composition | | | | |
| Predominantly White | x | | | x |
| Predominantly Latino/a or Black | | x | x | |

relationships with formal institutions shape their crime-control strategies. Maximizing variation in both local contexts and crime contexts increases the theoretical generalizability of the ideas that emerge from our analysis, which in turn deepens our understanding of variation in crime-control strategies across communities.

Through these comparative case studies, we identify three types of community responses to crime, each of which includes varying levels of public–parochial connections. These responses highlight how communities' particular characteristics, crime narratives, and local political and legal infrastructures contribute to varying types of public–parochial relationships that shape the types of crime-control strategy they adopt.

## METHOD

We used the extended case method to analyze responses to crime and offenders in four wide-ranging communities (Burawoy, 1991; Carr, 2003; Sullivan, 1989). The data came from two qualitative research projects focused on community responses to crime. The first project focused on differential community attitudes and responses to living in high-crime communities (Leverentz, 2011, 2012). The second project focused on community responses to SVP placements in two communities (Williams, 2013, 2016). Across the two datasets, we captured urban and rural, predominantly Black and predominantly White, high- and low-crime communities (see table 1 for a summary of the four sites). In the following discussion, we describe the data collection approaches used in each research project, and then we discuss how we analyzed the data for this article.

### THE CASES

#### Study 1: Community Constructions of Crime in Urban Hub and Factory Town[1]

This research began as an exploration of how communities define crime and criminals and how this is shaped by community context. The data for this article drew on targeted

1. We use pseudonyms for people and places. The exception to this is the states in which the sites are located and the city of Boston, which is the city in which Urban Hub is located, a reference point for Factory Town, and by far the largest city in Massachusetts.

ethnographic fieldwork in two communities in eastern Massachusetts. The goal of the project was to understand the community context of residents' responses to crime, offenders, and returning prisoners; as such, participant observation focused on public meetings and events that would likely at least partly address crime issues. Neighborhoods were chosen strategically to vary on key dimensions. The two neighborhoods that are the focus of the present article both had high crime rates and a reputation for being high crime. Residents in both areas were primarily concerned with gang- and drug-related violence. One, Urban Hub, was predominantly Black, and the other, Factory Town, was predominantly White, but with growing populations of color and of immigrants. Despite similar levels of crime and violence, the two places had starkly different narratives around crime. People in Urban Hub saw crime as a community problem to be dealt with largely in and by the community. In Factory Town, people saw criminals as outsiders committing crime against community members, and the solution was to get rid of the outsider-criminals, largely through formal criminal justice responses.

Fieldwork began in 2008 and consisted of 30 months of participant observation at public meetings and events in each of the two sites. These meetings typically took place at community centers, schools, and churches and included resident association meetings, police-sponsored community meetings, crime task force meetings, political hearings, and special meetings called after a violent incident. Audiences included law enforcement, service providers, clergy, community organizers, and residents. Leverentz and research assistants wrote brief notes during the meetings to capture issues and, as much as possible, the language used. They then wrote detailed fieldnotes after each meeting, elaborating on topics discussed, rhetoric, and interpersonal dynamics between participants. In addition, Leverentz conducted interviews with four community leaders in Factory Town and eight in Urban Hub. She identified interview respondents through their participation at community meetings and through snowball sampling. Interviews were semistructured and covered topics including respondents' roles in the community, as well as their perspectives on the community, crime and criminals, and dynamics around crime control. All were recorded and transcribed. Although the data for the first study do not represent all community perspectives, they do reflect dominant community narratives (Carr, 2003; Leverentz, 2012).

### Study 2: Community Responses to Sexually Violent Predator Placements in East City and Deserton

Study 2 aimed to understand how and why residents in California responded to SVP placements in their neighborhoods. In California, judges or juries review expert testimony and psychological evaluations to determine whether sex offenders nearing completion of their terms of incarceration should be classified as SVPs based on their risks of reoffending. Those labeled as SVPs are then involuntarily committed to a state hospital where they can choose to participate in a five-phase treatment program, in which the final phase is conditional release to a community. The state locates and secures housing for SVPs on conditional release, and it notifies local officials of impending placements. In many cases, these local officials then notify communities of upcoming placements; at which point, communities usually begin local opposition efforts.

As in study 1, site selection and data collection for study 2 were theoretically driven and targeted. After reviewing data on all SVP placements in California, Williams chose cases

based on variation in response strategies and local political and legal contexts, as well as on the availability of public information about the responses. The two cases in the current study reflect this variation. The response in Deserton focused heavily on litigation, whereas in East City, no single strategy dominated the community's response to the SVP placement. The political and legal contexts also differed between the two places: Legal institutions were almost nonexistent in rural, low-crime Deserton, whereas life in urban, high-crime East City was dominated by legal intervention. Politically, Deserton had no local or regional representation, whereas East City had a city council and was integrally connected to county politics. In addition, East City was a racially diverse, densely populated urban city, whereas Deserton was a predominantly White, small rural town. Paired with the sites in study 1, the differences between these sites maximize the variation necessary to build theory about the relationship between local contexts and responses to crime.[2]

Data for the two cases in study 2 are based on in-depth interviews conducted with community members and local officials, fieldwork, and archival data collection, all of which took place from 2009 through 2011. For the interviews, Williams used snowball sampling to identify those most active in opposing the SVP placements, starting with those named in media coverage of community opposition to the placements. As in study 1, this strategy yielded data from those active in local crime-control issues, allowing us to explore dominant themes among more visible community members. Williams interviewed 30 community members (18 in East City and 12 in Deserton) and 14 officials (8 in East City and 6 in Deserton), including political representatives, prosecutors and public defenders, and local law enforcement. The interviews covered a variety of topics, including general perceptions of the community, local crime, law enforcement, and political officials; initial reactions to SVP placements; and descriptions and perceptions of local opposition activities that occurred in the respondent's community. Although the interviews aimed to gather data on community responses to SVP placements, the range of topics covered and the in-depth interviewing method also yielded data about community members' broader perceptions of crime and criminals in their communities as well as their perspectives on local politics and law enforcement.

Williams supplemented the data from in-depth interviews by attending community notification meetings and protest events that occurred during the research period, as well as by gathering archival data from local government websites and media outlets. Similar to the fieldwork strategies outlined for study 1, Williams recorded brief fieldnotes during participant observation sessions and then expanded on them shortly after each field session.

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Although data for the current article were collected for projects pursuing different research questions, the shared focus on community responses to crime warrants a joint analysis of these two datasets. Both studies employed a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviews to understand how communities deal with crime-related issues and why they adopt the strategies they do. We use the extended case method, which seeks to extend existing theories by examining how a social situation is

2. For more on the utility of maximizing variation in qualitative, theory-building research, see Luker (2008).

shaped by external forces. In doing so, we adopt a genetic strategy, explaining differences across similar cases (Burawoy, 1991). We first analyzed our datasets, inductively coding transcripts and fieldnotes for insights into community members' perceptions of and responses to criminals and crime in their neighborhoods. After individually identifying key themes related to community responses to crime, including the racialization of crime, Othering, and aspects related to community relationships with key institutions, we coded our interviews and transcripts line by line for those themes.

The next step in our analytic strategy was a collaborative analysis, with a goal of improving theory about neighborhood responses to crime or the threat of crime. We noticed strong parallels in our individual findings, despite different field sites and crimes of interest, making a broader genetic analysis appropriate. We noted that community members expressed remarkably similar concerns across all four places, suggesting that the two studies tapped into similar social processes. Through conversations and memos, we identified common themes across all four communities through an iterative dialogue between existing theories and the data across the four sites. We discussed codes and merged similar codes across studies into a single coding structure. We then discussed emerging explanations and tested them against the data from each of our four sites, refining our explanations over time. In the sections that follow, we draw on representative examples to illustrate the varying community dynamics.

## COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO CRIME

In this section, we focus on the four communities, highlighting their responses to the general problem of living in a high-crime community or a specific crime-related incident (the proposed placement of a sexually violent predator). As we discuss, all had some sense of being politically and legally marginalized, although for different reasons related to their structural positions in their regions. Through analysis of these four communities, we propose new ways of conceptualizing configurations of public–parochial controls across places.

### PUBLIC ALLIANCES: RESPONDING TO CRIME AND CRIMINALS IN A WHITE-DOMINATED, RACIALLY HETEROGENEOUS URBAN COMMUNITY

According to most models of social control, racial heterogeneity and residential mobility undermine a community's capacity to self-regulate (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997; Wilson and Taub, 2006). At the time of data collection for the current study, Factory Town, a former mill town outside of Boston, had recently undergone significant demographic changes. Although historically predominantly White, the town had been experiencing a large influx of Black and immigrant populations. According to census data, the non-White population of Factory Town increased from 20 percent in 1990, to 38 percent in 2000, to 57 percent in 2010. It also had a high crime rate and a reputation for being high crime. Frustration with crime and newcomers' purported association with crime was a common theme among Factory Town's community leaders and residents who were involved in crime-control efforts. As in other studies of community-led programs and crime-control approaches (Becker, 2014; Carr, 2005; Leverentz, 2014), narratives of crime and appropriate responses to crime in Factory Town reinforced existing neighborhood divides and further

marginalized already disadvantaged groups. In regularly occurring meetings, the dominant views, predominantly those of long-term White residents, were rarely challenged. In larger and more diverse meetings, resistance or counter-narratives were quickly silenced or minimized. Combined with a traditional approach to policing in Factory Town, this manifested in residents' limited involvement in crime-control efforts and in an almost exclusive reliance on the police.

Fear of gang and drug-related violence dominated public meetings and conversations about crime in Factory Town. These fears were strongly racialized as Black and Latino outsiders victimizing White residents. These dynamics were illustrated in one well-attended community meeting in which police officers educated residents about gangs. Much of their presentation focused on MS-13, the Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Crips, and Bloods, all of which have ties to Blacks and Latinos but not to Factory Town. Although they acknowledged that many of these gangs were not in Factory Town, this key point was undermined by the repeated references to them and their violence, as well as by equating them with any Black, Hispanic, or Latino gang. Similarly racialized narratives were common in other meetings. In one, for example, a resident equated high-crime neighborhoods to 'third world countries.'[3] In others, court officials reassured people that even low-level offenders would be deported, a response clearly possible only for immigrant defendants.

During the period of data collection, Factory Town had a single regularly occurring community meeting that was tied to a then federally funded Weed and Seed site and was attended by representatives of criminal justice and social service agencies and a small number of residents. According to the program coordinator, Factory Town's two funded sites[4] were chosen through a collaboration among the county district attorney's office, the city police department, and the U.S. Attorney's office. According to the program coordinator, there was little resident involvement in the site selections; rather, they relied largely on crime-mapping data. This paralleled an overall "top-down" approach to social control, in which residents relied on police and other criminal justice officials to control crime.

The Weed and Seed programs targeted gang and drug-related violence, and the grant funds largely supported police overtime. This allowed law enforcement and other criminal justice and social service agencies to communicate and collaborate among themselves for the first time. In an interview, a law enforcement officer described his view of grant funding and collaborations. He said:

> We do these ride alongs with social workers. Police officers going out in the streets with social workers, and I told the governor, I said, "Listen, just so you know, I want you to know, 3 or 4 years ago, I didn't even talk to these people." And that's what it is. We didn't talk to social workers. We're the cops. … And we're only able to do them because of the [grant] money, but because of the ride alongs we're connected.

In talking about their newfound collaborations, the officers mentioned working with social workers, probation and parole officers, and departments of social services and youth

3. Single quotation marks (' ') indicate a paraphrased quote based on field notes. Double quotation marks (" ") are direct quotes from recorded and transcribed interviews.

4. These were consecutively funded. The first was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice between 1999 and 2004; the second between 2004 and 2009.

services. As with the site selection itself, little attention was paid to resident engagement or involvement.

In the early 2000s, the Weed and Seed program and the Safe Neighborhood Initiative, which was organized through the Massachusetts Attorney General's office, joined forces to hold a single monthly meeting for collaborators and residents. Residents learned about the meetings through word of mouth and through a mailing list of approximately 100 names. The program coordinator estimated that approximately 15 concerned residents attended the meetings each month, although in the meetings that Leverentz observed, typically a total of 15–20 people were in attendance, including law enforcement officers and other criminal justice representatives. Almost all who attended the meetings were White and long-term residents of Factory Town.

Much of each meeting was spent with official representatives reporting back on arrests and court cases and then asking attendees for their concerns and issues. The program coordinator described the monthly meetings as "a nice opportunity for residents to interact directly with law enforcement. That doesn't really happen otherwise that I know about on a continual basis … [it] makes it easier for them to make a phone call later on." Attendees also considered them a place to exchange information rather than to collaborate or strategize about how residents may more actively intervene. For example, a resident at one of these meetings relayed information about graffiti in his neighborhood and possible drug dealing, adding, '[I'm] just passing information along because it's all [I] can do in the situation.' In another illustrative exchange from a community meeting, a resident asked whether the police could 'stop by and harass these kids about wearing [bike] helmets? Maybe you can find something else on them once you stop them.' The police representative replied that, 'we like reasons to stop people,' and that he would look in to it. Both residents and police officers seemed more comfortable with residents reporting problems and police responding to them by finding new ways to make arrests.

In terms of demographics and narratives around crime, Factory Town was somewhat similar to Carr's Beltway; however, their responses to crime were starkly different. Beltway residents were more involved in their community's crime-control efforts through court advocacy, problem-solving groups, and neighborhood watches (Carr, 2005). One explanation of this difference in responses is the different context of policing approaches in each city: Chicago's approach during the 1990s heavily emphasized community policing (Carr, 2012), whereas policing strategies in Factory Town in the 2000s did not. When asked about community policing in Factory Town, the Weed and Seed coordinator said, "Unfortunately when times are tough, that usually tends to be the first thing that goes. … I don't know what the number is right now. If anything, it might be one or two officers that are actually community policing officers."

A small number of residents in Factory Town occasionally called for "real" community policing efforts, and they recognized cultural barriers to some residents working with the police. This call was more likely to happen at singular meetings that drew larger and more diverse groups of attendees. For example, a mayor's task force meeting drew about 75 people, approximately 20 percent of whom were people of color. The purpose of this meeting was to hear from volunteer committees tasked with producing plans for the city, 'regardless of budget concerns.' During the meeting, the public safety committee chair said that there is a 'gap between law enforcement and the community, and distrust.' A Black man in the audience responded that there was a 'cultural piece to understand, which is why people won't get involved.' Several others agreed, including another

resident of color who called for 'real community policing.' These residents talked about an understandable lack of trust of the police by some, like Cape Verdeans, who were often central to crime narratives in the region as a violent and gang-involved group. Residents at the meeting pushed for greater understanding of these residents' concerns and for more efforts by police to engage with them.

The sympathetic discussion of some residents' mistrust was particularly notable in its rarity. A few minutes later, however, a White woman pushed back, recommending the Weed and Seed meetings as a 'good way for residents to get information.' She thanked the police for their work and added, 'many programs do exist, but the community will always be a problem, regardless of language.' The street violence committee representative affirmed this by highlighting a 'culture of violence, and recommending the renaming of a police unit to the gang unit to give them more credibility.' The minority view in this meeting acknowledged resistance and mistrust of the police by some residents and called for more efforts by the police to engage these residents. The dominant narrative, however, portrayed a culture of violence that the police needed to fight against.

The local context of Factory Town shaped how social control played out. Rapid demographic changes combined with broad-based narratives of Black and Latino criminals contributed to many long-standing residents trusting the police and criminal justice system to protect the "good" residents of Factory Town and arrest criminals, who were racialized "Others." There was little sense that residents wanted to be more involved, despite their frustration with crime. Low levels of community involvement in crime control and the absence of a "community policing" culture impeded the development of strong collaborative public–parochial ties.

## TENTATIVE PUBLIC–PAROCHIAL PARTNERSHIPS: RESPONDING TO CRIME AND CRIMINALS IN PREDOMINANTLY URBAN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Given the strained relationships that Black and Latino communities often have with the police (Sampson, 2012), we would not expect them to engage in public–parochial partnerships in the same ways as White communities. Two sites in our research are predominantly Black and Latino and so allow us to explore how racial composition, and related interpersonal and political dynamics, contributes to their responses to crime. Urban Hub, a neighborhood within the city of Boston, and East City, a densely populated urban city in northern California, both have populations closely associated with crime narratives in the contemporary United States. In this research, Urban Hub residents were reacting to chronic problems of gang activity and violence in predominantly Black neighborhoods, whereas the community response in East City focused on an acute event of a planned SVP placement in a neighborhood with a mixture of African American and Latino/a residents. Despite the different types of crime events in these communities, their responses were very similar in that they focused on mobilizing parochial ties while negotiating tenuous and contested public ties. We argue that these similarities emerged because of the commonalities in local contexts across both places.

Crime figured prominently in everyday life in both Urban Hub and East City. Some sections of Urban Hub had among the highest crime and violence rates in the city. In East City, about a decade before the SVP placement, the city had one of the highest murder rates in the country. Although Urban Hub's reputation in its region had been

fairly stable in recent history, East City residents tended to be cautiously optimistic about recent improvements such as a decreasing crime rate and less overt drug selling than in the past. In both East City and Urban Hub, residents and community leaders actively worked against crime and violence.

There was a strong sense in Urban Hub that dealing with crime was a "community" issue, rather than something for which they could rely on the police department or city agencies to resolve. There were frequent references to what they, 'the Black community,' could do about crime and violence in Urban Hub and other predominantly Black neighborhoods in Boston. One manifestation of this framing was the number and variety of public meetings that at least partially dealt with issues of crime and violence. In addition to several active neighborhood associations, Leverentz regularly attended a long-standing weekly meeting focused on youth violence held at a community center, a monthly meeting organized by a group of clergy, a monthly meeting originally organized through a Safe Neighborhood Initiative site, and community meetings hosted by area police districts. Several of these meetings were primarily geared toward or attended by service providers, law enforcement, community organizers, and clergy, and residents dominated the audiences of the police meetings and neighborhood associations.

In addition to meetings, community agencies and organizations developed programs related to crime and violence, often grounded in the personal experiences of its members. A network of community activists worked to reduce crime outside of law enforcement involvement by engaging social service agencies and encouraging small grassroots efforts to develop programs, work with youth, and otherwise strengthen the community. Some of these programs and events included a police presence, but self-identified (and sometimes unpaid) youth advocates and community organizers led them. Some of these community organizers had past involvement with gangs or crime, which motivated their current efforts. For example, one community organizer described his youth in an interview:

> All they [childhood friends] really had depended upon drugs to sell.... So, to see a lot of my friends go to jail, and one night you're hanging out and it's like, "I didn't see you in like six months." You know, locked away and you can kinda see them kind of change. They kinda like giving up on themselves, "I'm having good times, I might as well just continue doing what I'm doing. There's no hope for me." ... they were good people... and some of them came from good homes. They weren't always broken. Some came from bad homes, so it was various different things.

His nuanced description of friends who had been involved in drug selling and had gone to jail or prison while remaining fundamentally good people was a common refrain among residents and community leaders in Urban Hub. These experiences and relationships shaped their perceptions of appropriate responses to crime and violence.

Several activist women had children who had been murdered or imprisoned, and they had organized several community groups around this experience. One of these women described her organization at a meeting. She said, 'Gang members belong to somebody.... We try to help bury a loved one with dignity and respect, because all the odds are against them.' She then stressed the 'importance of engaging parents on both ends, both victims and perpetrators, without shame or denial.' Many of those in Urban Hub had similar experiences of being incarcerated themselves, knowing people who had gotten 'caught up' in the criminal justice system, and being victimized directly or indirectly. Although

they wanted a safe community, this did not translate into removing everyone who had ever committed a crime or been arrested from the community altogether; rather, they wanted the offending to stop and the people to remain. This was a starkly different narrative than in Factory Town, where most community leaders and involved residents showed little empathy or understanding toward "criminals."

Some crime-prevention and community-building programs in Urban Hub included formal and informal relationships with the police. The area, like Factory Town, had a federally funded Safe Neighborhood Initiative site. They also had several "VIP" (Violence Intervention and Prevention) sites, which were neighborhood coalitions led by the Boston Public Health Commission to improve safety through partnerships between city departments and residents. Police were often invited to, and participated in, the array of regularly held neighborhood association and task force meetings. Yet, even with these meetings and unlike in Factory Town, significant barriers to trusting law enforcement contributed to a strained relationship between agents of formal social control and community members.

As is true in many urban areas, Boston's Black communities have had a history of negative police–community interactions that the police have been working to overcome (Brunson et al., 2015; Brunson and Miller, 2006; Weitzer and Brunson, 2009). One police official said in an interview for this study that the police approach to gangs, drugs, and violence had been problematic in the recent past. Gangs, drugs, and violence increased in the 1980s, followed by a suppression response by law enforcement:

> And it really turned out to be kind of a failure in our first run at this, taking on gang, youth gang issues.... We had a stop and frisk policy. There were a lot of things that combined to really create a huge gap between the police department and the community. And so that was a really tough time.... As we moved into the mid-90s, we got better at looking at these issues. More comprehensive in our thinking created much more, much stronger partnerships with community clergy and law enforcement agencies.

The clergy played a key role in bridging divides between the police and community members (Brunson et al., 2015), but significant tension between and toward the clergy came to a head every few years. One dimension of this was a reflection of what one community organizer described as 'a long-standing feud [among the clergy] based on notoriety and who got more attention.' These ongoing personality conflicts led to periodic media attention, truces, and "peace meetings" of clergy. In addition, some residents, community leaders, and activists accused activist clergy who worked with the police as being "fake clergy" who were on the take.[5]

This perspective reflected an ongoing suspicion of law enforcement and their strategies to control Black residents. The historic tension between the Black community and the police remained relevant to how people viewed the police and to how they framed appropriate responses to crime in Urban Hub and neighborhoods like it. A community activist

5. See also McRoberts (2005) for a discussion of church activism and contestations around it in Boston's Black churches, as well as see Brunson et al. (2015) for a discussion of the role of the clergy and the church in police–community relationships in Black communities in Boston, including the ways in which interpersonal feuds complicated anticrime efforts.

speaking at a large meeting to discuss a police–clergy partnership for a controversial gun program, said 'there should be a respectful relationship between the Black community and the police. Not lovey-dovey, but respectful. It is their job to protect the public, and it is [my] job to be the public.' He went on to say 'having a [police-led gun program] like this shows that we, as a Black community, have given up and can't solve our own problems. We can address our problems by building community.' At the same meeting, a Black state senator said that the involvement of clergy with the police had exacerbated tensions between the clergy and the public. So, although clergy were centrally involved in bridging police–community divides, this was not a smooth or uncontroversial project. There remained significant suspicion of public–parochial partnerships and a strong sense that crime and violence needed to be handled by residents and community leaders, not by law enforcement or the criminal justice system.

Community members in Urban Hub were responding to a general crime problem in the area, but those in East City came together to fight a specific crime-related event—the placement of an SVP in their city. State and regional officials had worked together to secure housing for the SVP in a working class neighborhood in East City, and community members adamantly opposed the placement. The local response came in the context of a history of strained relations between local residents and the police, as well as of strained relationships with local and regional politicians. Prior to incorporation in the early 1980s, the community's relationship with law enforcement was particularly fraught. One resident explained, "The sheriff's department would come in and beat people down and arrest people and do what they wanted to do in the community." These kinds of heavy-handed police tactics contributed to community mobilization to incorporate as a city. Residents wanted their new police department to curb crime, but they also wanted to be free of the unfair targeting they had experienced from the sheriff's department.

For some community members, little had changed in regard to police–community relations, whereas others praised recent changes. When asked whether the police were sensitive to the needs of the community, one local resident said, "I don't think so." Another person explained that some officers "try to bend the law to make it fit them. … I've seen them right out here on the corner of [the closest intersection]. They'll put their foot on somebody and smash it down." Still, a larger proportion praised the police for their efforts in the community, suggesting that police–community relations had begun to improve over time. The East City police department also initiated improvements by engaging in actions similar to those in Urban Hub. They held monthly beat meetings throughout the city in which residents could learn about law enforcement activities and voice their concerns about crime-related issues. A resident who regularly attended these meetings explained, "This [new] police chief has really made an impact in the city for a positive change." From her perspective, the meetings exemplified the police chief's efforts to improve the community and address local issues. Other community members echoed these sentiments. When asked how well the police dealt with local problems, one explained the importance of the neighborhood beat meetings because they "show that they're accessible to the citizens of the community and open to not only feedback, but also to explaining what they're doing to create a safe and positive environment." Thus, although some remained skeptical, others appreciated the police department's efforts to connect with the community.

Similar to Urban Hub, community organizations and activists in East City also sometimes worked with local law enforcement to address ongoing crime problems. One local

activist mentioned her work with a regional interfaith alliance that met regularly with city leaders, including the city council and the police chief. She praised the police chief and explained that, "through those skills that he has, and with the desire of the nonprofits that are working toward a better community, we were able to come together. And we instituted a couple more community activist groups and embraced the youth of the community, gave them other alternatives." These kinds of partnerships among key community leaders, grassroots organizations, and law enforcement were a start toward improving police–community relations.

When a judge ordered the SVP to be placed in East City, however, residual tensions between police and community members emerged. The police chief spearheaded a community notification meeting as well as a series of neighborhood meetings to help local residents understand the conditions the SVP had to abide by, as well as the security measures in place to minimize the public safety risks. Despite the fact that local law enforcement had not been involved in selecting East City as the location for the placement, some community members blamed them for bring the SVP to their town. One person said, "It was, you know, [the police chief's] idea to move him here." Another agreed, saying, "It was all the police. They knew about it. They attended the meetings. They did everything." She went on to explain that the neighborhood meetings about the SVP placement fell short of creating an alliance between the community and law enforcement. As she described it, "The police were at the meetings, they made the meetings. But they were, they were even dressed in regular clothes, they didn't even have uniforms. They said, 'This is not official, we don't have our uniforms just to show that we're one of you, we're like you. We are all in this together and we're all human beings.' They were trying to be on our level. But I don't think that really worked." Despite efforts by law enforcement to work with the community to mitigate concerns about the SVP placement, community members still believed they had to rely on other strategies to resist the placement.

In addition to skepticism about police motivations, residents were also skeptical of the motivation and ability of political institutions to act in the community's interests, which undermined support for political strategies for opposition. This skepticism had two sources—some believed that local politicians had no real political power, and others believed these politicians used their power to further their self-interested political goals. In one example, the mayor organized the largest protest to the SVP placement, which some community members characterized as the mayor's attempt to advance his political self-interests. As one individual put it, the mayor organized the protest only to "show support to the community" even though "he knew he would not accomplish nothing by [protesting]." This comment suggests that some perceived the protest as a tool to gain political support rather than as a real attempt to stop the SVP placement. Even those who had more faith in their city council members believed that their political power could not have stopped the placement. One commented that local leaders "didn't have any political juice," and another said that although the city council members "did everything in their power" to stop the placement, they ultimately had little leverage to do so. This skepticism of politicians and their influence parallels the skepticism toward clergy–police partnerships in Urban Hub.

One informal group considered litigation to fight the SVP placement but did not have the money or broader support from the community to pursue it. The organizer of this group believed that litigation could have helped their cause but said that "unless you have money to get an attorney … uh, there was just no other way we could challenge

it." Others protested and delivered petitions to the landlord. In addition, despite a lack of faith in political institutions and their lack of access to the courts, community members continued to mobilize parochial ties through informal protests and petitions. One man explained that he believed, "we should be able to, whoever comes, we should know and be able to say no. Or yes." Another resident said that the protests were "worth it" because "If you don't stand up for something … not to say that it was illegal what they did by putting him here, but I just wanted, I just wanted to express my disbelief with the state." When asked to explain what she believed was wrong with the placement, she went on to describe the placement decision as, "Cruel and fully disengaged from the needs of the community." These and similar statements made by many community members suggest that the community's approach to dealing with this crime-related issue involved not only solving this single problem but also expressing their broad dissatisfaction with and distrust of institutions and people in position of power.

Thus, the community in East City invoked a similar configuration of public–parochial controls as in Urban Hub: They relied on parochial controls but also tentatively and somewhat skeptically reached out to public institutions. This configuration of control emerged from the local contexts in each place, which included reputations of having high crime rates, high levels of economic disadvantage, and histories of overpolicing and resulting legal cynicism. The interaction between these place-based characteristics and crime narratives in both places contributed to a sense of marginalization, which in turn shaped the public–parochial ties in both places. Although there were some efforts toward public–parochial partnerships, they were frequently challenged and a strong sense remained that the communities had to take care of their own problems.

## GRASSROOTS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: RESPONDING TO CRIME IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE, RURAL COMMUNITY

Compared with urban communities, those in rural areas face unique challenges in crime control. Their geographic isolation and smaller populations contribute to stronger parochial ties, but they also have less physical access to formal institutions than have those in urban areas. Deserton, the rural community in our study, provides an opportunity to examine the public–parochial ties that emerge in predominantly White rural areas. As in marginalized urban areas, these types of communities experience obstacles to accessing public controls, but they also have the racial advantages associated with being predominantly White. The case in Deserton shows how racial privilege, socioeconomic status, and geography intersect to bring about community responses to crime that rely primarily on parochial relationships but also involve trusted public institutions when necessary.

Deserton's rural location, low crime rate, and small population of approximately 200 residents, including some who had worked as current or former prison guards, contributed to a strong sense of the town as a safe place that allowed freedoms not necessarily found in more urban places. One woman explained that before the SVP placement, kids in Deserton "didn't stay in their house and watch videos and watch TV, they were out. They roam free. We didn't have to worry about somebody hurting them. I mean, they've been running free all their life." Others explained that they did not lock their doors and sometimes even left their keys in their cars.

Although community members in Deserton described themselves as a tight-knit, safe, and caring community, some believed that outsiders perceived them differently. One

described their reputation as a "bunch of dumb hicks." Another expressed her fear that during the SVP placement, the community would be portrayed as "a backwoods town with their beer in one hand and gun in another" because "sometimes we feel like we're being represented that way." Others believed that outsiders had no idea that people actually lived in Deserton; as one resident said, "because what they do is they travel that freeway and … you see dead palm trees, you see junk cars, you see places that shouldn't even be standing any longer, empty buildings." These perceptions extended to community members' beliefs that politicians treated the community as if it were invisible. A former prison guard explained, "Realistically, we are nothing. Our little votes don't mean nothing to them when you look at the big overall picture of it all." Their miniscule number of votes did not make a big impact in elections, which made it easier for politicians to neglect the small, mostly poor White community in the middle of the desert. Because of their small size and negative reputation, Deserton residents tended to be suspicious of newcomers. Community members often noted that people moved to Deserton to get away from something else, whether it be city problems such as traffic and crime or personal problems such as run-ins with the law. When new people moved in, community members wondered what they were hiding from. As one put it, people "don't just come here just because this is the place to be."

When crime-related issues did occur in Deserton, residents tended to pursue informal solutions first and then engage with the legal system only in the rare instances when informal controls failed. In an interview, one community member described crime control in the community as, "We police ourselves." Another explained, "Usually if something gets stolen, you know who did it and you just go and get it back." Once the perpetrator had been identified, informal controls helped keep him or her in line. As explained by a community member, "So let's say if somebody started having problems, whether it's getting involved with drugs or money problems, whatever, it goes around and 'hey watch out, that guy's been stealing gas.'" The town's low crime rate, small population, and 50-mile distance from the nearest sheriff's substation made this type of self-policing easier and more practical than it would be in places with more crime and local police forces.

Members of law enforcement confirmed the perceived lack of regular policing. Sheriff's deputies rarely patrolled the town, interacting with local residents mostly when they called for help. When asked about the relationship between law enforcement and the community before the SVP placement, a division chief at the sheriff's department explained, "There's not a lot that goes on up there [in Deserton], so it's kind of like 'out of sight, out of mind.' Um, you know, we go, obviously when there's a call for service, but it's not something that's a high priority to, to go in there and spend a lot of time because there are other fish to fry elsewhere."

Although community members' standard response did not usually involve going to the formal legal system, they still believed they could call on legal authority to work in their favor when necessary. Experiences in calling law enforcement for help encouraged this belief, as did a victory in a court battle over the siting of a landfill near Deserton. In this case, a handful of community members litigated to stop the "dump." The litigation was a grassroots effort to engage with the courts, as indicated by the person who spearheaded these efforts. She explained, "You know the first time we sued the dump, we couldn't get an attorney. I bought a how-to book from some fellow in [a nearby county]. I didn't even have a computer then. We wrote all of our legal briefs on a typewriter and we argued in superior court and won." This victory, in her words, "was amazing. And then after

that, all of the big environmental organizations [started] helping us, you know, helping us raise money so that we could have real lawyers do this. Pretty amazing. That's something I'll never forget if I live to be a hundred." Although community members differed in their perspective on the landfill, most mentioned the litigation efforts as an historic local event that had drawn a strong community response. This demonstrated the community's willingness to engage with the courts to solve a local problem, and it showed community members that they could successfully access formal institutions when needed.

The battle over the dump paved the way for community support for litigation in response to the SVP placement. When community members found out about the proposed placement of a "dangerous" SVP outsider in their town, they rallied around one community member's efforts to sue the county for an alleged "undue influence" on the SVP placement process. The community supported the lawsuit by fundraising for court appearances, going to court, and helping to "process the paperwork." One local resident explained, "It was a community effort. [The leader of the litigation efforts] was just the one with the brains and the ability to put it all together and put it to words and action." Initial victories in court resulted in the county releasing redacted documents related to the decision-making process and appeals to force the county to release the full documents. The appeals reached the California Supreme Court, which ultimately declined to review the case. When the district attorney promised on national television never to place another SVP in Deserton, the community dropped the case.

Despite community members' reliance on the law to stop the SVP placement, many perceived litigation as a grassroots opposition tactic. One community member explained, "If you want to oppose something like this, you probably well know that you have to do it legally. You can't just make telephone calls and so on and so forth." In fact, for many, the lawsuit was the most important element of their community's response, as illustrated by one individual who said that they tried to "get the word out as best we could that [community members] should follow the legal process. Nobody should do anything on their own." The consistency with which community members referred to the lawsuit as a "community effort" that comprised the bulk of their response to the placement reflected faith in the power of legal authority to help achieve collective goals when private and parochial networks could not solve a problem.

The community in Deserton also "policed themselves" and the unwanted outsider by mobilizing parochial controls before and after the SVP moved in. When asked about whether and how they had achieved their goals in responding to the placement, one community member remarked, "Watching everybody's back. Knowing that we would take care of everybody to check in on everybody. And watch everybody's kids for them. And that we were gonna let him know that we knew who he was and what he was and why he was there. And I think we did that as a community too. Because apparently, from what I was told, he was scared to death." Thus, the community relied on public ties to fight the placement, but they also mobilized parochial ties to "scare" the outsider and exert informal control after he had moved in, while signaling to residents that overt retaliation was not acceptable.

The response to the SVP placement in Deserton emerged within a context in which community members felt politically invisible and generally interacted with law enforcement and the courts only as a last resort, and only when they requested help. Being left alone reflected a privilege of rural Whiteness. They did not arouse suspicion because they were geographically isolated, largely White, and had few-to-no serious crimes. In the rare

**Table 2. Factors Shaping Community Responses to Crime**

| Level of Trust | Public Control Emphasis | Parochial Control Emphasis |
|---|---|---|
| Trust in the Criminal Justice System | Public alliances (Factory Town) | Grassroots public engagement (Deserton) |
| Absence of Trust in the Criminal Justice System | | Tentative public–parochial partnerships (Urban Hub and East City) |

instances when they did have to interact with formal law enforcement or the courts, they turned to these institutions for help in solving local problems. This perception of the law contributed to community members' willingness to engage public controls when necessary to control crime, while emphasizing their own efficacy as a community.

## COMPARING THREE TYPES OF COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO CRIME

Evidence from Factory Town, Urban Hub, East City, and Deserton suggests that interactions among racial dynamics, urban and rural geography, and political and legal institutions contributed to the emergence of three types of community responses to crime. Each of these types involved different ways of mobilizing public–parochial relationships in light of communities' levels of trust in the public institutions that may have helped or hindered their crime-control efforts. Table 2 summarizes these dynamics.

Community members in urban Factory Town perceived crime as a problem committed by outsiders against insiders, and as in other places, narratives around crime were strongly racialized (Chiricos, McEntire, and Gertz, 2001; Chiricos, Welch, and Gertz, 2004). This was exacerbated by recent demographic changes that brought many newcomers who fit the racialized stereotypes of criminals. The community's high-crime reputation, low levels of community involvement in crime control, and a general trust in the criminal justice system contributed to a reliance on public controls in which (White) residents expected the police and other formal agents of social control to control crime through arrest and incarceration.

The configurations of crime control in Urban Hub, East City, and Deserton emphasized parochial controls over public controls, but the strategies of informal crime control differed based on community members' trust in the criminal justice system. Local contexts shaped both the emphasis on parochial controls and levels of trust within communities. As in Factory Town, residents in Urban Hub and East City resisted the negative stereotypes of their communities. How they did so, however, was distinct from the response in Factory Town. A history of overpolicing and resulting legal cynicism left many residents with a strong sense that they could not count on law enforcement or the criminal justice or legal system (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011; Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). Rather than highlighting an "us versus them" narrative of good residents and bad criminals, many in Urban Hub and East City emphasized that crime was a community problem and largely theirs to solve. Although they perceived crime and violence as important problems, they had little faith that formal institutions would reduce crime or respond adequately to their needs.

Community members in both places resisted the idea that either law enforcement or local politicians could help them solve local crime problems. Instead, their responses to crime emphasized community-building strategies that would confront very real local crime issues without further harm. This meant mounting resident-driven efforts to solve

crime-related problems, including establishing grassroots organizations, local credibility, and sometimes, informal and formal working relationships with public agents of social control. These partnerships were precarious and often contested, as they required challenging longstanding legal cynicism (Kirk and Papachristos, 2011; Sampson and Bartusch, 1998).

The cases of Urban Hub and East City also illustrate the parallels in responses to chronic and acute events. Although communities in both places made some progress toward bridging internal divides as well as those with formal institutions, these efforts did not result in mobilizing public–parochial ties when the acute crime event occurred in East City. In that case, lingering mistrust of formal institutions of control and lingering doubts of residents' ability to navigate them dampened support for public–parochial partnerships to address crime problems. Similar fissures emerged in Urban Hub around new police-led programs and in responses to clergy–police partnerships. These dynamics suggest that local configurations of control are constantly adapting in light of new crime events, with historical patterns of public–parochial partnerships impacting current and future attempts to control crime and criminals.

The differences between the public control emphasis in White-dominated Factory Town and the parochial control emphasis in predominantly Black and Latino East City and Urban Hub imply a racial dimension to the types of public–parochial relationships that emerge in different places. White communities may have more faith in law enforcement and formal social institutions to combat local crime problems (Carr, 2005; Lai and Zhao, 2010; Wu, Sun, and Triplett, 2009), but the case of Deserton suggests that geographic location also interacts with race to shape the type of crime control a community employs. Deserton was a predominantly White, poor, community, but like the communities in East City and Urban Hub, those in Deserton had limited connections to formal legal and political institutions. They felt politically powerless because of their small numbers and geographic isolation, but they embraced their lack of access to law enforcement because it stemmed from geographic isolation rather than from a negative, crime-based reputation. The SVP placement was one of those cases in which they felt the need to invoke the formal legal system. The community could not fight the placement on their own, and they would not leave the issue to formal authorities to address independently. Rather, the parochial ties in Deserton engaged with public controls to respond to the placement, as well as to other local crime problems. As in Factory Town, community members in Deserton felt empowered to invoke the legal system when necessary and believed it would work for them. Because of their earlier success in court, starting with a typewriter and without a lawyer, they felt empowered to go to court in ways that the community in East City did not. Thus, although the community in rural Deserton shared the sense that they must address crime problems predominantly through parochial controls, the racial privileges and lack of legal cynicism they experienced meant that they trusted the criminal justice system to deploy public controls in the interests of the community when called on to do so.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has identified key characteristics of local contexts that help explain variation in crime-control strategies in general, and public–parochial relationships in particular, across places. Across our four sites, we identified three responses to chronic

and acute crime concerns: a reliance on public alliances, tentative public–parochial partnerships, and grassroots public engagement. We have identified several key dimensions, including racial composition, the related processes of legal cynicism and trust in local institutions, and local geography, all of which are reflected in the level of engagement with local institutions and in the ease of and willingness to bridge parochial and public ties.

Our findings build on research on community disorganization and systemic theories of crime and crime control (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Carr, 2005; Sampson, 2012), as well as on those rooted in the ideas of political economy of place (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Vargas, 2016). By looking across communities, we can identify characteristics that shape how they mobilize public–parochial ties in response to crime problems, both acute and chronic. A community's racial composition shapes its responses to crime because of how it impacts relationships with formal systems of social control (Brunson and Miller, 2006; Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, 2007; Kirk and Matsuda, 2011; Kirk and Papachristos, 2011). In our study, Black and Latino communities were more likely to perceive a need to be actively involved in maintaining a *community* sense of control. This emerged largely out of a history of a lack of trust in the criminal justice system, legal cynicism, and a corresponding sense of self-reliance. Although there were tentative efforts to engage the police, mistrust remained high.

In contrast, the two predominantly White communities had more faith and trust in formal systems of control. This meant that they felt entitled to rely on law enforcement and the legal system when they felt the need. In our high-crime, increasingly racially heterogeneous site, this was the primary response. Nevertheless, our one rural community also had a strong sense of independence and self-reliance, not because of legal cynicism, but because of its lower crime rates and physical isolation (Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells, 2005; Yarwood, 2015). Law enforcement was less accessible to its residents, but the community rarely felt the need to engage it. So, although community members could call the police or use the courts in extreme circumstances, they started with community-based efforts.

In each of the four sites, these sociopolitical and historical contexts shaped how communities viewed crime, criminals, and their range of acceptable responses. Understanding these contexts is the key to understanding how collective efficacy, new parochialism, and other theoretical outgrowths of systemic theories take shape in community crime-control efforts. Future research should build on our findings in two ways. First, we have examined communities in three types of places: predominantly White, high-crime urban; predominantly high-crime urban communities of color; and predominantly White, low-crime rural. All of these communities were working class or economically disadvantaged. The development of crime-control strategies in other types of communities such as predominantly rural communities of color, higher crime rural communities, lower crime urban communities, or wealthier communities remains unclear. Research on these and other community types can help inform our understanding of patterns of crime control across local contexts, as well as the development and implementation of policies or programs that encourage neighborhood-level informal social control (Leverentz, 2014; Ramey and Shrider, 2014; Vélez and Lyons, 2014).

Second, our ethnographic research has helped build theory about community responses to crime. Future research needs to test the generalizability of our findings by examining which local factors, such as racial composition, geographic location, narratives about criminals, and political and legal contexts, most strongly explain the emergence of the three

configurations of social control that we have identified. Doing so has the potential to expand criminological explanations of how community contexts shape formal and informal social control strategies and, more broadly, contribute to new strategies for reducing crime in marginalized communities.

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