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The Perceptual Basis of Social Organization¹

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Abstract

Traditional literature on the subject of social organization argues that it is the condition of being organized that produces positive community outcomes. These theories strongly assert that neighborhood characteristics matter, *only inasmuch* as they determine the organizational state that a community is able to achieve. However, if neighborhood attributes are significant determinants of the level of social organization achieved by the community, theorists fail to specify why communities with ostensibly identical characteristics may nonetheless realize divergent levels of social organization—and eventually outcomes. The research I present argues that scholars must consider the factors that influence residents' *willingness* to engage within their communities, instead of narrowly focusing on neighborhood traits believed to impact their *ability* to become organized. In this paper I will use experimental survey methods to argue that the decisions to engage in community social organization are not only dependent on objective neighborhood characteristics, but also influenced by normative community evaluations transmitted across individuals.

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Introduction

Traditional literature on the subject of social organization argues that it is the condition of being organized—namely the existence of neighborhood friendship bonds, informal organizations, and a willingness to police local juveniles—that produces positive community outcomes (Kornhauser 1978; Sampson and Groves 1989; Shaw and McKay 1942). These theories strongly assert that neighborhood characteristics such as socioeconomic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility matter, *only inasmuch* as they determine the organizational state that a community is able to achieve. However, if neighborhood attributes are significant determinants of the level of social organization achieved by the community, there is little discussion as to why communities with similar objective characteristics may nonetheless realize significantly different levels of social organization—and eventually outcomes.

The theory I present contends that the degree of social organization obtained by a community is not only determined by its level of available neighborhood resources, but is also a product of residents' *willingness* to engage with one another to create and capitalize upon these resources. While there is of course individual-level variation in propensity towards engaging in community-based activity, I argue that neighborhood-level variance in these attitudes is significant. Moreover, the source of this variance can be attributed to subjective factors that are beyond the scope of the current theories of social organization. In this paper I discuss how *subjective evaluations of neighborhoods* are crucial in determining how residents perceive their communities, and whether they become willing to participate in the requisite forms of social organization.

In the following sections I will discuss how the extant literature engages the study of social organization, and examine how residents' perceptions and willingness are addressed within this literature. I will then explore how the countervailing concepts of neighborhood stigma and credit that I introduce here may provide a basis for understanding why residents of different communities exhibit differences in their proclivity towards becoming organized. In the final

section, I will present the results from an experimental survey designed to test the theories presented here. Given that the participants in this survey were college undergraduates, this experiment should be seen primarily as a pre-test, and the results considered suggestive of what might be observed if using a more representative sample.

Social Organization Theory

Measuring social [dis]organization

As an analytical concept, social organization refers to the ability “of a community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective social controls” (Sampson and Groves 1989: 777). Within this model, objective neighborhood attributes—namely, its ethnic heterogeneity², socioeconomic status, and residential mobility—determine the degree of neighborhood-level organization achieved by the community. Within this theory, participation within the tenets of social organization—participation in local volunteer organizations, creation of informal friendship networks, and exercising control over local juveniles—subsequently determines the community-level outcomes, with crime rates typically serving as the primary measure of these outcomes. A basic representation of this social organization model is depicted in figure 1.

<Insert Figure 1 here>

² While the use of “ethnic heterogeneity” in early models was an explicit reference to the diverse ethnic groupings that populated many urban centers, transformations in the ecology of urban areas (due to changes in immigration patterns, the growth of suburbs, segregation, etc.) have lessened the occurrence of truly ethnically-mixed communities (Massey, 1990). However, as ethnographers such as Patillo-McCoy (1999) and Small (2004) have discovered, the existence of culturally-heterogeneous communities—even if dominated by a single ethnic group—can have much the same effect on residents’ ability to organize as ethnic heterogeneity had in early examinations (See Suttles 1968). Throughout this paper as I refer to the effects of heterogeneity, I am collapsing both forms of resident differentiation into this single phrase, while the mechanisms that link heterogeneity to social disorganization remain constant.

This theory relies heavily on two significant (and perhaps erroneous) assumptions. The first relates to the second arrow in figure 1, which represents the relationship between the community's degree of social organization and the outcomes it eventually realizes. This model assumes that social organization is the primary, if not only, determinant of neighborhood-level outcomes—or at least the level of violent crime the community experiences. This is assumed to be accurate, at least according to Shaw and McKay's (1942) theory, because all of the effects of neighborhood characteristics were believed to be mediated through the various mechanisms of social organization. Thus neighborhood characteristics only matter to the extent that they facilitate or prevent a community from *becoming* socially organized—and to what degree.

If this is true however, and social organization is in fact the ultimate determinant of such outcomes, it should also be true that communities with similar levels of social organization should exhibit similar levels of crime. As an extreme illustration of this, we can infer that all communities, once stripped of *any degree* of social organization, would experience the same degree of crime. This is clearly not the case. Due to a host of factors, some neighborhoods are more likely to experience certain types of crimes than others. This reality precludes researchers from working backwards from observed outcomes to infer a level of existing social organization—as many investigations indeed do (see Bursik 1988 for a critique of this strategy). Attempting to do can so easily lead to false assumptions about the communities under study.³ However, this limitation does not negate the value of social organization as an explanatory tool, provided that we use it to account for differences in the outcomes observed by the same community over time, or between communities that could otherwise realistically be assumed to

³By presuming that organization and outcomes are linked, and inferring the level of organization present in a community by the outcomes it experiences, difficulty arises when accounting for neighborhoods that are indeed low in crime but lack the necessary intervening organizational characteristics—which may be the case in many middle or upper-class communities (Baumgartner 1988). Conversely, there may be a significant organizational presence within lower-income communities that nonetheless experience a relatively high level of crime (see Browning et al 2005). This latter conundrum frequently appears in many ethnographic works, when researchers observe a level of organization within the low-income communities they study which run counter to their expectations of low (or non-existent) community-level organization derived from the high levels of crime and/ or physical disorder that the communities also exhibit (see Suttles 1968; Whyte 1943; Venkatesh 1997).

experience the same types of social outcomes, and not as a measure by which to compare dissimilar communities.⁴

The second critical assumption of social organization theory corresponds to the first arrow in figure one, representing the purportedly direct relationship that exists between the neighborhood's objective characteristics and the level of organization it is able to achieve. The socioeconomic status, degree of heterogeneity, and rates of residential mobility of a neighborhood do indeed impose limits on the residents' ability to cohere and effectively engage in actions to further their own best interests. However, what investigations of social organization often fail to note is that the level of organization a community is feasibly *able* to achieve is distinct from the level they actually *do* achieve. I contend that this incongruity arises because the actual degree of social organization within a community is the product of residents' *desire* to engage in these activities, *moderated* by the degree of organization that is actually possible given their fixed resources. Indeed, the resources provided by the objective neighborhood conditions may be even less important in determining what organizational level is achieved because it merely establishes a finite upper bound⁵, whereas the degree to which residents are *willing* to participate in the community circumscribes the actual level of organization.

⁴ The model presented by Sampson and Groves (1989), which is an extension of the original Shaw and McKay (1942) model, does not mediate all of the effects of neighborhood attributes through the social organization mechanism, but rather indicates a direct effect of these characteristics on the observed levels of crime and delinquency. The dotted lines in figure 1 indicate the additional relationship articulated by their model. While including the direct effect of these exogenous community characteristics into the model allows for a better understanding of how differently-constituted neighborhoods experience divergent outcomes, I still believe that the concept of social organization is best utilized as a tool for understanding disparate outcomes within *similar* communities, or the same community over time.

⁵ It is possible for this upper bound to be very high even within disadvantaged communities, *if* the residents are willing to maximize their objective resources by investing an extraordinary amount of time and effort. However, a community with greater objective resources may require less effort by its residents to achieve the same goals. To illustrate this point, consider two communities with different objective resources that are both attempting to sponsor an after-school program for local youth. The community with the higher socioeconomic status may have a few residents who together could underwrite the entire program, while residents of the less advantaged community would need to undertake a significant fund-raising campaign to obtain the same amount of money. Both of these communities would be equivalent in terms of their ability to achieve their shared goal—although the degree of organization within the latter is comprised of a greater human capital investment while the former primarily relies upon its economic capital. However, if the wealthier neighborhood exerted human capital resources to the same extent as their lower-income

Moreover, it may also be incorrect to assume that it is these *objective* characteristics that primarily drive residents to participate within their communities. Again, while these undoubtedly restrict the maximal level of organization, willingness is what ultimately governs the community's social organization. If this willingness were determined solely by the objective neighborhood characteristics, then there would be no variance in organizational levels between neighborhoods that are similarly constituted.

Throughout this paper, I will argue that the desire to engage with one's community is a response to how that neighborhood is perceived, and that this perception is the product of the subjective normative value placed on particular attributes of that community. I use the term "normative value" to indicate that these neighborhood-level judgments are not neutral characterizations, but rather positively- or negatively-construed evaluations arising as a response to any of a host of neighborhood characteristics. While these normative values are derived from the larger society in which these residents exist, the value imputed to any particular neighborhood characteristic is often variable, and depends greatly on the orientations of one's immediate community (however this may be defined) as well as one's own personal attributes and preferences. Even decisions as to what characteristics are indeed salient can vary between individuals, making normative judgments highly subjective. As a result, the attributes from which these assessments are derived must be understood as having a dynamic meaning across individuals and community contexts.

Within in the framework I present here, "willingness" can be conceptualized as having two distinct components, both of which are affected by perceptions of one's community. It entails both 1) having the desire to contribute to the maintenance or social order of the community, and 2) being amenable to interaction with fellow residents to achieve this goal. If either of these is lacking, it is improbable, if not impossible, for an individual to become engaged

counterpart, combined with their additional economic resources, the level of social organization they could achieve would be much greater.

with local neighborhood organization.⁶ Thus, the perceived value of the neighborhood and the persons within it—for good or for ill—significantly affect the likelihood that an individual will participate within their community. In subsequent sections of this paper I will further expand on this process, and speculate as to how particular normative judgments may arise and become dominant within a given neighborhood.

While discussions of social organization typically do not *explicitly* incorporate either the effect of resident willingness or the influence of subjective perceptions on the creation of social organization, these two concepts nonetheless emerge in various ways within the literature. I will now turn to some of the research that does include these themes, and further discuss how they may be more fully-incorporated into a model of social organization that seriously considers their effects.

Willingness and perception within current literature

The dominant models of social organization focus on the differential ability of communities to become organized, and on the objective features that determine this ability. One concept, known as collective efficacy, developed by Sampson et. al (1997), is closely related to this original paradigm but does incorporate willingness into the process of community-level organizing. In their theoretical discussion, the authors contend that “the willingness of local residents to intervene for the common good depends in large part on the conditions of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbors” (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997: 919). Moreover, perception plays an implicit role in the creation of collective efficacy because the presence or absence of informal neighborhood-level norms is not something easily observed or measured by residents. Rather, it must be assumed or “guestimated” based on how the neighborhood, its

⁶ Because these components are closely related, and both required for residents to be willing participants within their community, I am collapsing these two elements into the single concept of “willingness” throughout this paper.

residents, and their actions are *perceived* by the individual. Overall this model is closely related to social organization theory because it also ultimately attempts to explain neighborhood outcomes as a product of community-level participation (with measures of participation similar, but not identical, to those within the original social organization model). Additionally, it relies on the same set of neighborhood characteristics as determinants of this participation.⁷ This is a valuable expansion of the original theory, because it acknowledges that willingness to engage with ones community is an important determinant of its outcomes. However, it still considers this willingness to be a product of objective community attributes—either because objective conditions make individuals more likely to espouse these norms, or because objective conditions make individuals more likely to perceive them—and therefore in my estimation does not go quite far enough in its reformulation.

In the well-known ethnography of a Chicago slum, Suttles' (1968) investigation reveals both the effects of willingness and perception on resident cohesion and involvement, although he does not explicitly flesh out such an argument. He interpreted the lack of engagement among slum residents to be a response to the fact that they “did not inspire levels of trust necessary to the usual round of neighborhood activities” (6). Thus, based on his estimation, dynamics outside of the basic social organization model may, to some degree, have determined the level of community involvement. Additionally, he states repeatedly that this lack of trust stemmed from

⁷ Within the collective efficacy theory, the community-level attributes that influence its organizational level are “concentrated disadvantage” (which is a construct that includes various measures related to neighborhood socioeconomic status, as well as the percentages of female headed families, minors, and African Americans), immigrant concentration and residential stability. These community-level attributes certainly tap more of the *specific* neighborhood characteristics that are associated with socially-disorganized communities (particularly since Wilson, 1987). Within this theory, the proposed mechanism through which “collective efficacy” helps determine neighborhood-level outcomes is distinct from that presented by social organization. Specifically, Sampson et al (1997) argues that it is prevailing (*or perceived*) community norms that determine the outcomes realized by the community. However, while they do measure these perceptions directly, they contend that this perceived collective efficacy is strongly related to the objective community attributes indicated above. Thus, even though they present a different mechanism *through which* these attributes matter, the objective measures upon which collective efficacy relies for its formation (within the context of the neighborhood) are fundamentally more precise measures of the same conditions that have been accepted as the relevant predictors within the traditional social organization model.

the fact that these individuals are indeed residents of a “*slum*”—with all of the moral inferences that such a designation entails. While Suttles does not challenge the presumption that these residents are untrustworthy or otherwise morally lacking, he does acknowledge that the perceptions that residents hold of one another are largely a by-product of the negative identity of the community itself. He notes that residents used their shared residence as a basis for “making judgments about how one will behave as well as assessing and describing the behavior of others” (Suttles 1968:13). Thus the popular (and internalized) normative value of the community played a significant role in determining how residents perceived one another, and subsequently inhibited their willingness to engage in the social organization of the community.

Not all studies of neighborhood processes have failed to explicitly recognize the relationship between residents’ perceptions and their ultimate participation within neighborhood-level activities. Kefalas (1998) studied a Chicago-area community that was considered exceedingly valuable by residents, and constantly lauded as an ideal place to live, despite the fact that by objective standards it was an “unremarkable, working class community” (73). Despite the “smells from the factory, the noise from the airport, and the soot that makes all the buildings look gray” (Kefalas 1998:64), the residents’ idyllic conception of their neighborhood led to an exceptionally-high level of unity, positive expectations of others, and an extraordinary degree of collective action. Kefalas explains that the specific shared experiences and worldviews of neighborhood residents helped to imbue the community with a uniquely positive meaning, which “mobilize[d] people to act *in defense of a very particular view of community*” (Kefalas 1998:66; italics mine). A neighborhood characteristic that contributed greatly to this enhanced value was the relative absence of non-white residents. In another context this same attribute may be considered negative, or may not affect residents’ determinations of value whatsoever. The central observation to be gleaned from Kefalas’ study and applied to this discussion is the extent to which subjective perceptions of value can structure the reality to which residents’ actions are oriented.

While Kefalas' study focused on the subjective value ascribed to *real* community attributes, I contend that it is equally possible for false perceptions to shape evaluative judgments. In an article by Sampson and Raudenbush (2004), the authors use systematic social observation to gauge the level of physical disorder present within a series of Chicago neighborhoods. They then sampled residents within these communities to identify the degree of disorder they perceived. Sampson and Raudenbush found that those believing that there was a greater amount of disorder within their neighborhood also participated in less social exchange with their fellow residents. While this cross-sectional study is unable to identify causality—i.e. determine whether perceptions of disorder inhibit the degree of social exchange, *or* if a lack of social exchange leads to a more negative perception of residents' surroundings, *or* if this is a recursive process—they are nonetheless able to establish that these perceptions and engagement within neighborhood-level activities are linked. Moreover, the authors found that the level of physical disorder perceived by residents was often more closely related to the racial composition of the neighborhood than the actual amount of disorder present. So, besides illustrating once again the prominent role that perception plays in key social organizational processes, this study also valuably demonstrates that even when judgments are being rendered against seemingly objective neighborhood characteristics, subjective evaluations of other community traits may nonetheless lead to false perceptions which are no less powerful in fostering meaningful reactions.

The final study I will discuss to illustrate the presence of willingness and perception in the process of community organization is Small's (2004) ethnographic study of a Latino housing project. He used the concept of "narrative frames" to explain the relatively subjective ways in which various residents viewed their community, and argued that the content of these frames influenced their treatment of the neighborhood and determined their level of involvement. While all residents lived within the same community, those that were aware of, and saw value in, the political struggle that surrounded the original creation of the neighborhood perceived the community to have a deep intrinsic value and as worthy of being maintained. At the same time, it

appeared to others as nothing more than a typical, unsatisfactory housing project undeserving of attention or concern. Small succinctly summarizes this difference in perspective, saying that “though living in an undesirable ghetto was insufficient reason to participate in local activities, preserving a beautiful community was a powerful motivator,” and asserts that “how residents see their neighborhoods affects how they react to it and whether they are willing to ‘get involved’” (Small 2004: xv). This is a clear illustration of the degree of subjectivity present within the evaluative process, in that residents exposed to the same conditions made different determinations of what they felt was salient about their community, and made unique decisions about how to interpret those facts.

Similar to what I present here, Small’s argument is a response to the existing social organization model. While the traditional theory predicts that the social organization of a community will deteriorate as its structural components also decline, Small counters that the positive framing of the community may persist, even when the objective conditions that served as the source of the frame are gone, thus maintaining this organization for a longer period of time. This is a very constructive challenge to the existing theory, and relates closely to my argument. However the most meaningful distinction between the two is that whereas his ethnographic method does not allow for causal inference regarding the relationship between framing and resident involvement, the experimental method used here is designed particularly to help establish causality. Additionally, my hypotheses do not rely on changes in the objective conditions for discrepancies in neighborhood perceptions to occur. To the contrary, I argue that the conditions that residents respond to need not have ever existed in order to have a significant effect on how they perceive their communities or structure subsequent reactions. Nevertheless, Small’s study and my own should be considered complimentary explorations, both moving the field closer to a more accurate understanding of social organizational processes.

Perception-Based Model of Social Organization

Now that I have highlighted the important role that perception and willingness play within the extant literature, the next step is to formally incorporate these concepts into the existing model. In figure 2 I have done just that. This revised model of social organization is faithful to the original in that it still maintains that social organization is an important predictor of neighborhood outcomes. Objective community attributes are still relevant, because they prescribe limits on the community's organizational capacity. However, an important point of divergence between the two models is in their respective *determinants* of participation. In my model, the social organization achieved by a community is direct outgrowth from how that neighborhood is perceived.

<Insert Figure 2 here>

As stated previously, perceptions arise as a response to the subjective normative judgments rendered against the neighborhood. While the range of characteristics that could potentially affect these perceptions is limitless and may vary dramatically across time and place, I contend that there are three major types of neighborhood-level beliefs, under which particular judgments can be subsumed:

- I. **Neighborhood expectations.** Perceptions of what is acceptable or expected within the neighborhood will structure how people believe they should act. *For instance, residents who perceive their neighborhood to be a place where people spend time interacting with their neighbors or maintaining their property will be likely to engage in those activities themselves.* (eg. Kefalas 1998)
- II. **Neighborhood value.** Perceptions of the overall value of the neighborhood will lead residents to act in ways that uphold that value (or non-value). *For instance, residents for whom the historical significance of the community causes them to value it highly will be inclined to engage in neighborhood activities to maintain the value which they perceive.* (eg. Small 2004)

- III. **Resident character.** Perceptions of one's neighbors will influence whether or not residents view each other as worthy potential allies and are willing to interact with them either socially or in pursuit of shared goals. *For instance, residents who view their neighbors as generally untrustworthy or morally lacking will be disinclined to engage with these individuals, and perhaps actively attempt to avoid them.* (eg. Suttles 1968)

Simply drawing from the limited examples in the literature described in the preceding section, we see how characteristics ranging from the neighborhood's history, racial composition, socioeconomic status, and physical condition of neighborhoods all were able to serve as a basis for these subjective judgments. Once these attributes were judged as either positive or negative, they served as the source of the overall perceptions of the community. Hence, the model in figure 2 shows neighborhood perceptions to be a product of these types of judgments. The readings of any specific characteristics are particular to the observers, meaning that they can vary in connotation depending on the (historical, social, economic, cultural) location of the perceiver, and in some instances do vary within the community as the social identities of residents differ in meaningful ways (i.e. Small 2004). Because of this, the opportunity for variance is often present.

In order to designate the process by which a particular attribute leads to the raising or lowering of the neighborhood value I will utilize the opposing concepts of creditization and stigmatization, as employed in Bord's (1976) study on imputed deviant identities. In his study, he uses the "terms 'stigma' and 'stigmatized'...to refer to persons about whom one has information which lowers their social value to some considerable degree [and] the terms 'credit' and 'creditized' refer to those about whom one has information raising their social value and prestige significantly" (109). Applying these concepts to the preceding discussion, we can consider characteristics that are positively valued and increase the subjectively-perceived quality of the

neighborhood as *creditzing*, while those that are valued negatively and reduce its worth as *stigmatizing*.⁸

Despite the possibility for individual-level variance in subjective judgments of value, neighborhoods can generally be conceived as having a single creditized or stigmatized identity. To the extent that residents within a particular community share demographic characteristics, experiences, and are equally embedded within larger cultural systems, they are also likely to share value sets and cultural schemas, thus increasing the likelihood that they would view the same attributes in a similar manner. As an example, consider Kefalas' (1998) content, white, working class community. Their shared appreciation for a majority-white neighborhood could be attributed to common racial attitudes resulting from their similar demographic backgrounds, or to their oft-cited collective experiences with urban decline. From either perspective, their commonalities led them to value certain attributes similarly, thus allowing the neighborhood-at-large to have a singular creditized identity.

Additionally, a neighborhood can be considered to have a single subjective identity because even when differences in individuals' judgments *do* exist there will usually be one set of opinions that will dominate within the neighborhood. In these cases, even if a minority possesses opposing judgments, upon which their perceptions and subsequent actions are based, the impact of the majority acting upon their beliefs will outweigh these dissenters and ultimately be determinative of the conditions of interest—namely the degree of organization and experienced

⁸ There is an extensive body of literature on stigma and stigmatization which will not be reviewed here. Bord's (1976) study in particular is highlighted because I have adopted his definitions of stigmatization and creditization, however Goffman's (1963) discussion of stigma presents a number of analytical concepts, most notably that of courtesy stigma, which can be applied to the neighborhood context to further explain how stigmas attached to residents may "spoil" wider perceptions of the community—and vice versa. Additionally, Loury (2002; 2003) and Eidheim (1998) present a race-based understanding of stigma which, as we see from the preceding discussion, may be very applicable to a number of neighborhood contexts. Lastly, of particular relevance to this discussion are works by Wacquant (1993), Warr (2005), and Dean and Hastings (2002) which explore the effects of *neighborhood-level stigma* on the treatment received by residents from the larger society, the development of networks within a stigmatized community, and the difficulties in attracting new residents to stigmatized areas, respectively. While these works all expand significantly on the ideas presented here, an extensive discussion of these studies and the concepts they present are beyond the scope of this paper and will be addressed in a future iteration of this study.

community outcomes. An example of this process exists within Small's (2004) study. The two different cohorts were oriented towards two different cultural systems—one tied to a strong Latino identity and the other more mainstream. So while the neighborhood held creditizing attributes to some, its status as a housing project was a stigmatizing attribute to the majority who held a more mainstream set of values and expectations. Because the majority responded to this negative perception, the level of organization ultimately achieved by this community reflected this group's negative judgments. Thus, conceptualizing it as a "stigmatized neighborhood"—a neighborhood which is de-valued because it possesses attributes that lower its social value—is an accurate characterization.

While the preceding discussions have generally portrayed individuals as developing community-based perceptions in response to a thoughtful and considered evaluative process, such is not always the case. Although these perceptions are indeed founded on subjective judgments, not all such judgments flow from direct contact with the community in question. In some instances residents may indeed evaluate their communities and come to unique conclusions regarding its subjective value, and even modify their judgments over time in response to new information or personal experiences. However, when an individual is unfamiliar with a neighborhood, the subjective judgments upon which their perceptions are based need not only be their own, but may be gleaned from the larger society or other sources. Judgments along a good/bad continuum are frequently rendered and transmitted across individuals. If these assessments made by others are accepted they are equally as powerful in forming neighborhood-level perceptions as those formed by the individuals themselves. It is quite possible that others' judgments be contradicted by the individual's own countervailing experiences as they reside within that community. However, the perceptions that emerge from these original judgments play a significant role in determining the extent to which individuals will actually engage with their community and how such experiences are interpreted. Therefore the opportunity for an

individual to obtain and interpret countervailing information may be significantly affected by the judgments they hold prior to their first encounter with the neighborhood.⁹

One final component of the perception-based model that is important to note is the apparent exclusion of “willingness”, which I have previously emphasized as playing a crucial role in the creation of a socially-organized community. While “willingness” is not explicitly present in this model, it can be considered represented by the arrow connecting perception to participation. I have already conceptualized willingness to be a product of the way residents perceived various aspects of their community. Because of this, the degree to which residents are willing to participate in the organizational aspects of their community should be predetermined by the perceptions—either positive or negative—that they hold.¹⁰

This perception-based model of social organization was created as a response to the existing literature in this field, and as a result is derived in large part from the data presented within existing investigations. However, while this is a valid basis for deriving a theory, there is still a significant need to present additional empirical support. To that end, I have developed an experimental survey, designed to test the effect of subjective normative judgments rendered by others on subjects’ evaluations and ultimate desire to participate within the social organization of a hypothetical community. While this study has clear limitations, which I will address in the discussion, the methodology used has a distinct advantage over other types of investigations

⁹ This holds true for both stigmatized and creditized neighborhoods. In the former, a negative opinion of the community may preclude individuals from getting to know their neighbors, and lead them to interpret ambiguous or neutral neighborhood characteristics and interactions in negative manner—even *further* impeding neighborhood-level engagement. On the other hand, entering a neighborhood with creditized perception of the community may cause new entrants to interpret similarly ambiguous characteristics within a positive framework, thus reinforcing preconceptions and encouraging neighborhood-level interactions.

¹⁰ Note that this model attempts to explain *neighborhood-level* differences in organization. There will still clearly be differences in individual proclivity towards activities like collective action and even socializing, and thus on an *individual-level*, the willingness to engage with one’s community will clearly involve more considerations than simply how they feel towards their neighborhood. While self-selection into neighborhoods means that individuals with certain types of attributes or attitudinal proclivities may not be equally-distributed across communities, this variation should not affect the validity of the overall model and its ability to determine why certain *neighborhoods* experience higher levels of organization than others.

because it allows for controlling all other potentially confounding variables, as well as establishing a causal relation between the variables of interest.

Testing the Perception-Based Model

The goal of this experiment is to test whether or not subjective evaluations have an effect on neighborhood-level perceptions and subsequent decisions to participate in social organizational activities, and also whether value judgments supplied by others are able to influence these subjective assessments. Participants are exposed to a neighborhood that has either a stigmatized or creditized social identity and then asked to judge various aspects of the community as well as gauge their likelihood of participating in certain activities *if they were to reside in that neighborhood*. While this experiment has clear limitations, it also has significant advantages—both of which will be addressed within the discussion section below.

Experiment Overview

This experiment utilizes a 3 (objective neighborhood quality: high, medium, or low) x 3 (normative label: “good”, “bad”, or absent) between-subjects experimental design. Each subject is exposed to a picture of one neighborhood accompanied by either a “good” or “bad” normative label, or no label at all. The “good” and “bad” conditions for each neighborhood are attempts to simulate the normative judgments that are frequently assigned to communities, thus rendering them stigmatized or creditized. Providing subjects with neighborhood information in order to create their own subjective judgments could lead to unwanted variance within this relatively small sample. To avoid this, I have chosen to control the participants’ subjective assessments by presenting them with normative judgments that have already been rendered against the community. This will ensure that all subjects incorporate the same subjective judgments into

their decision-making processes.¹¹ These subjective judgments are presented as assessments given by respondents who have already completed the survey.¹² By using assessments given by peers rather than by actual residents of that neighborhood these judgments will not appear to represent actual knowledge of the neighborhood quality, but rather are clearly opinions which can be accepted and incorporated into subsequent perceptions to whatever degree the subject desires. I expect that variance will exist in the degree to which individuals are swayed by subjective judgments—both within this experiment and within real life. However, I do believe that the net influence of these assessments across all individuals will lead to significant differences in the overall perceptions and treatment of the communities in question.

My primary interest is in the different ways a single neighborhood, with a constant objective quality, may be perceived and reacted to as subjective judgments rendered against it vary. This does not require including neighborhoods of different quality. However, by varying the neighborhood quality as well, I will be able to observe if certain neighborhood types are more susceptible to the effects of labeling than others. To this end, I have included neighborhoods of objectively high, medium, and low quality.¹³ For each neighborhood type, the no label condition will serve as the control. In theory, this should provide the best estimate of the reaction a

¹¹ I expect that there will be significant variance in the extent to which they are accepted and incorporated. Nonetheless it is crucial to my analysis that I am aware of what subjective judgment they are responding to, thus it is beneficial to impute this judgment.

¹² In actuality, these judgments were predetermined by the researcher and randomly assigned to participants.

¹³ The neighborhoods chosen as the visual stimuli for this survey were selected by a panel of twenty-one undergraduate student judges. Through an online survey, judges were shown ten neighborhoods and asked to rate each on a scale of one to ten. Thurstone scaling was then used to identify the neighborhoods that received consistent ratings and whose mean scores were separated by equal intervals. The mean and median scores for each of the selected pictures were nearly identical, with a difference of less than .15 between a neighborhood's mean and median score, and a consistent interquartile range of two. All pictures were taken on the same day in within the Boston-Cambridge area. The selected medium- and high-desirability neighborhoods both feature single-family units, while the low-desirability community features what appear to be multi-unit homes. None of the pictures included any residents of the neighborhoods, or any other explicit cues as to its class or racial make-up. In only the medium-desirability neighborhood is a car present, but it is only slightly visible, and the make and model are not identifiable. See appendix A for images of the neighborhoods included within this survey.

neighborhood's objective condition is likely to foster, without any knowledge of the normative value it was assigned by others.

Following exposure to the stimuli, respondents are asked questions regarding the neighborhood's quality, their perceptions of its current residents, and the respondents' own likelihood of engaging in various types of activities, *if they were residents of that neighborhood*. The positive and negative labeling conditions will be compared to the control, thus providing preliminary evidence of the power of normative labels on resident perceptions and the subsequent formation of social organization.

Participant characteristics

This experiment was conducted through the use of a survey administered online to students at Harvard University. The total sample size was 212.¹⁴ Participation within this study was voluntary, and no inducements were offered. Students were recruited through emails sent to various dorm, student group, and class lists. While the dorm-wide emails reached students majoring in a variety of subjects, course-based emails were sent primarily to classes that were taught within the Department of Sociology. Lastly, members of African-American student groups were also recruited through contacts within these organizations.

Survey design

Once directed to the survey webpage, respondents are told that this study is an attempt to understand how individuals evaluate neighborhoods when making decisions about where to live. Subjects then complete a short survey regarding their demographic characteristics. After

¹⁴ Relevant participant characteristics are displayed in Appendix B.

submitting these responses, subjects are then randomly sorted into one of the nine conditions created by the 3 (neighborhood condition) x 3 (label) matrix. For those assigned to the control conditions the direction page states: “You will now be shown a picture of a neighborhood. After viewing the picture, please answer the questions that follow to the best of your ability.” For both the good and the bad label condition, the direction page prompt reads: “You will now be shown a picture of a neighborhood and given its current most popular rating. This rating is based upon the responses given by previous survey respondents. After viewing the picture, please answer the questions that follow to the best of your ability.” This rating was predetermined as either “*highly desirable*” in the good label (creditization) condition or “*highly undesirable*” in the bad label (stigmatization) condition.

After reading this prompt, respondents are then directed to the next page, which features the neighborhood picture, the label (if applicable), and the remaining survey questions regarding their perceptions of the neighborhood. The picture of the neighborhood and its label remained in a frame taking up approximately the top third of the page while respondents completed the entire survey. Within the control condition, the picture is accompanied by the words “Neighborhood Survey”. Within the other two labeling conditions, the title “Neighborhood Survey” is then followed by “The current most popular rating for this neighborhood is:” and the appropriate desirability label.¹⁵ Once respondents complete this survey, they are directed to the final page, in which they are debriefed and given the researcher’s contact information for any further questions.

Results

The total number of respondents was 212, with a range of 23-26 respondents per cell, and a modal cell size of 23. The number of conditions within this experiment does not allow for a very large sample size per cell, and thus is an obstacle in achieving significance in most of these

¹⁵ See Appendix C for a partial replication of the “bad”, and control condition survey pages.

analyses. As a result, I will primarily be looking at patterns and relationships that appear to emerge from this data, in hopes of undertaking a more complete investigation in the near future.

The first test is whether I can observe an effect of popular normative labels on respondents' own perceptions of the community. Desirability ratings are the most basic measure of such judgments. These ratings ranged from one to seven and were normally distributed with a slight positive skew. The mean rating was 4.53, with a standard deviation of 1.83. Table 1 shows the differences in mean ratings and standard deviations across conditions. As we would expect, desirability ratings were influenced by both the objective and subjective conditions to which the respondents were exposed. Mean desirability ratings increased as the objective neighborhood quality increased, and were higher in the "good" label condition than the "bad" label condition overall.

Despite the consistency of this general pattern, there was some deviation within the no-label condition. In the medium quality neighborhood condition, the mean response from subjects not exposed to any label was lower than those exposed to the bad label. Similarly, for the high quality neighborhood, the mean rating for the no label condition was higher than that for the good label condition. This deviation cannot be attributed to a higher degree of variance within the control condition, as one might initially assume, as the control condition consistently exhibited lower levels of variance than any of the other label conditions. However, the degree of this irregularity was quite small, and may disappear altogether in a larger study with a more representative sample.¹⁶

¹⁶ It is also possible that for some respondents, the labels served to motivate them to rate the neighborhood in a more extreme manner—and possibly in the *opposite* direction than the label indicated. For example, one subject (who was included in a small pre-test but excluded from the sample used in this analysis) indicated after taking the survey that he felt the previous respondents' had much higher standards than him because they rated a community he thought to be very nice as highly undesirable. He attributed this to the upper class status of the previous respondents which he emphasized he did not share, and intimated that his response was very much in contrast to theirs. While this illustrates that the stimulus was indeed believable, it also raises concerns that by knowing the population from which the stimuli is supposedly drawn may allow subjects *feelings* or *perceptions* of that group to influence how they ultimately respond to the stimuli. Although this may not be a serious concern, it may account for some of the unusual variance and is something that should be considered in future replications of this experiment.

<Insert Table 1 here>

The first hypothesis of this study was that neighborhood-level perceptions result from the subjective evaluations rendered against the community. As the table shows, these perceptions, as measured by desirability ratings, do not simply reflect the objective neighborhood attributes, but incorporate subjective valuations as well. It is somewhat unsurprising that the stated desirability ratings did in fact influence subjects' own judgments of neighborhood desirability. However, while these imputed ratings only indicated how desirable these neighborhoods appeared to others, this single subjective assessment nevertheless colored subjects' evaluations of other neighborhood attributes—such as the degree of local problems, and feelings of safety, as shown in tables 2 and 3. This shows that subjective assessments rendered against one aspect of the community are not limited in their effect, but can color judgments about a host of neighborhood characteristics—thus increasing the likelihood that the crucial perceptions which ultimately determine residents' willingness to engage within their communities may also be affected.

<Insert Tables 2 and 3 here>

The next series of analyses attempt to illustrate the greater explanatory power behind a model that includes subjective considerations, as opposed to one that is solely depends on objective neighborhood attributes. Table four compares different single-variable regression models to identify which best accounts for differences in respondents' neighborhood-level perceptions. The dependent variables for each equation are noted in the column headings. The first three dependent variables are respondents' perceptions of neighborhood attributes—the level of existing problems, safety, and organization. The values in each of the columns are the

standardized coefficients for the independent variable used in the model, and the adjusted R-square for the model itself.

Model 1 uses the objective neighborhood condition as the sole predictor variable, with perceptions of each attribute as the dependent variable in separate regression equations. For each of these equations, the objective neighborhood quality—high, medium, or low—is strongly predictive of respondents' ratings on the dependent variable, and the coefficients are significant at the .001 level. These relationships are all also in the expected direction, with higher quality neighborhoods eliciting a lower perception of problems, and higher perceptions of safety and existing social organization. Model 2 uses the desirability ratings previously given by respondents as the predictor variable, replacing objective quality in the same set of equations. This rating is effectively the *perception* of the neighborhood held by respondents, and reflects both the subjective and objective information that they were presented. As the table shows, the standardized coefficients for the neighborhood ratings are higher in each equation than the coefficients in model 1, where the independent variable is objective neighborhood quality. Again the coefficients are highly significant at the .001 level, and the R-square for each equation using model 2 is higher than those using model 1. This indicates that model 2, using neighborhood ratings as a measure of respondents' perceptions, performs better in explaining variance in perceptions of problems, safety, and existing organization.

<Insert Table 4 here>

The last column in figure four pertains to my final hypothesis—that the likelihood of an individual participating in the social organizational activities of their community depends largely upon preexisting neighborhood-level perceptions.¹⁷ Again comparing the

¹⁷ The dependent variable, the likelihood that respondents would participate in organizational activities *if they resided in the neighborhood depicted*, was created by taking respondents' total scores on a six-item

effectiveness of the two models, we see the continuation of the same pattern, with both models having significant coefficients—although in this instance the coefficient for model 1 is only significant at the .01 level, while neighborhood rating remains significant to .001—and the perception-based model remains more effective in accounting for variance. However, in addition to arguing that neighborhood-level perceptions are a more accurate determinant of participation, I also argued (consistent with collective efficacy theory) that the most *significant* perceptions are those related to the community's existing or potential level of organization. To test this additional hypothesis I have included a third model within table 4 which has respondents' perceptions of existing organization as the sole independent variable.¹⁸ Looking at the third model however, we see that the perceived organization variable has a might higher coefficient than the dependent variables in either of the other two models, and is still highly significant at the .001 level. In addition, the level of variance accounted for by model three far surpasses the adjusted R-squares in any of the other two models. This appears to support the hypothesis that perceptions of existing organization significantly affect individuals' own decisions to participate.

Discussion

While these results are more suggestive than determinative, they seem to provide initial support for the hypotheses under investigation. Perceptions of neighborhoods *on a variety of dimensions* were indeed affected by the labeling conditions. This suggests that when evaluating neighborhoods, individuals' judgments are influenced by subjective assessments of the community, and not only by an objective reading of its characteristics. Within this experiment,

scale. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .821, and individual items for this variable along with relevant statistics are presented in Appendix D.

¹⁸ This variable was created by taking respondents' total scores on a nine-item scale measuring the degree of existing organization that respondents perceived within the community. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was high at .856, and a description of the items and the correlation matrix can be found in Appendix D.

the “subjective assessments” are imputed rather than derived from individual’s own subjective interpretation of neighborhood attributes. However, in real life, even when individuals are powerfully swayed by others’ judgments of a community—enough to influence their own subjective evaluations—these “others” typically have some real or perceived familiarity with the community in question. This was clearly not the case for the subjects in this survey. In this experiment, the power of these subjective judgments (or “labels”) came from its designation as “most popular”, rather than being more accurate than the perception that the respondent was likely to come to on their own.

However, this leads me to speculate that the influence of subjective judgments would be even *more powerful* when derived from an individual’s own interpretation of neighborhood conditions, because this process would reflect their own values and socio-cultural locations. Therefore, I would expect a test of this same hypothesis that allows individuals to evaluate neighborhood characteristics according to their own value-systems would exhibit an even stronger relationship between the normative judgment rendered against the community and subsequent perceptions.

The other critical hypothesis tested by this experiment was regarding the relationship between neighborhood-level perceptions—particularly those related to existing social organization—and decisions to engage with the social organization of the community. The analyses presented above showed that subjectively-based perceptions of the community were more strongly related to subjects’ willingness to engage than were the objective neighborhood conditions alone. Moreover, the perception of existing social cohesion and participation-related norms were mostly strongly related to the future likelihood of participation among respondents.

Model three in the analysis presented in table four is also consistent with the Sampson et al (1997) collective efficacy model discussed above. However, while perceptions of norms were indeed highly correlated with likelihood of participation, it is crucial to note that this *perception* was not solely a response to objective neighborhood attributes, but rather the combined product

of objective and subjective factors. This analysis does not attempt to adjudicate between the collective efficacy model and the perception-based model of social organization that I present here—nor do I think that such arbitration is necessary. However, it nonetheless seems to support my original contention that while future participation in social organization may be significantly influenced by perception of organization-related norms, that perception itself is a response to the subjectively-understood characteristics of the community and not solely an automatic response to its objective attributes.

This study has a number of limitations, not the least of which is the sample that it relies upon. Not only are the Harvard University students included within this study considerably more privileged than the American population at large, simply their position as students means that they are very unlikely to have any real knowledge of, or experience with, actively participating in the social organization of the community. It is very unlikely that they would know what such activities actually entail, or under what circumstances they would be most likely to participate in them. Any real test of the hypotheses presented here must be done on a representative adult population to be truly significant, but this survey can be considered a pre-test that will hopefully be replicated on a more acceptable sample.

Additionally, using an experiment to test these hypotheses has both significant advantages as well as shortcomings. First among the advantages of this methodology is the ability to control all relevant independent variables. Additionally randomization alleviates concerns of self-selection effects which are often raised in other neighborhood-level survey research. Lastly, to the extent that differences are observed across experimental conditions, *causal* claims can be made, rather than solely associational claims, to which observational research is limited. Unfortunately, while the artificiality of an experiment increases control, it also reduces the generalizability of its findings. While this experiment eliminates many of the idiosyncrasies that individuals might encounter within a given neighborhood, it is possible that those idiosyncrasies significantly help determine neighborhood-level involvement in the real

world. Moreover, the interactions that take place within a neighborhood may dramatically influence many of the variables under study here. While this type of experimental research may indeed help identify what would happen in neighborhoods that are differentially perceived, if all else was equal, all else rarely *is* equal. Nevertheless, I believe that this type of research can be very valuable in developing and testing hypotheses, and can be even more powerful when combined with qualitative research based within actual communities.

For future iterations of this study, there are various ways in which the current design can be improved in order to glean more informative results. One change in the current design would involve providing objective information about the neighborhoods depicted. This would address concerns that respondents are overly influenced by labels within this experiment than they would be in a non-artificial environment.

In addition to providing more information regarding the neighborhood, I would still include the subjective judgments rendered by others, in order to gauge the influence that this type of information has on individuals' own judgments. However, in future research, it may be advantageous to situate these judges by indicating that they have *some* familiarity with the community in question—although they do not reside within it. This may be superfluous information to some respondents. However the possible advantage of this information is that most neighborhood judgments passed among individuals come from those with some familiarity with the area in question—however biased or ill-informed these judgments may be. Therefore it may be more reflective of the actual transmission of value judgments if respondents perceive them as coming from individuals with some familiarity of the area, rather than simply depicting the opinions of similarly estranged respondents.

Another possible change to this study would be to exclude the “high quality” neighborhood condition. There is a less-obvious relationship between outcomes and the degree of organization within more advantaged communities, given that they frequently have external resources to circumvent or alleviate the types of problems a socially-organized community is

expected to combat.¹⁹ Therefore it is unclear if respondents' perceptions of low organization within this type of community reflect a perception of unfavorable neighborhood norms, or if it is more indicative of a belief that an affluent community need not be actively organized to achieve positive outcomes. The last significant change that I would make in a future iteration of this study is to allow for some consideration of race in the evaluative process. The racial makeup of the community seems to frequently emerge in these studies as a characteristic that can powerfully influence subjective evaluations (e.g. Kefalas 1998; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004; Small 2004; Suttles 1968). Therefore including this factor in an experimental endeavor that controls for a host of other associated conditions may shed some light on the relationship between race, perception, subjective value, and ultimately, community outcomes.

Conclusion

Because of the multitude of idiosyncrasies that differentiate one neighborhood from the next, identifying the exact cause of divergent neighborhood outcomes would be an impossible feat to accomplish. However, utilizing an experimental methodology allows us to focus on a single characteristic that differs across communities and may be a crucial component in determining the outcomes of interest. The research design utilized here—if applied to a relevant sample population—may effectively illustrate the effects of subjective neighborhood judgments on the process of becoming socially organized. Nevertheless, this research should not be taken alone, but rather supplemented with insight gleaned from actual community-based research. Such a multi-faceted approach would help us to identify if the observed effects of stigmatized community identities remain determinative of community outcomes when a host of other unique neighborhood dynamics are also present. Despite the limitations of the research presented here,

¹⁹ For example, frequent police monitoring and private security systems may render groups like the neighborhood watch unnecessary. Thus, perception of this group's absence may signal that it is not perceived as necessary, rather than that residents would be unwilling or unable to maintain such a group.

the proposed extension of existing social organization theories can only serve to further our understanding of the processes involved in obtaining outcomes that are critical to sustaining a healthy community.

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Figure 1: Standard Social Organization Model

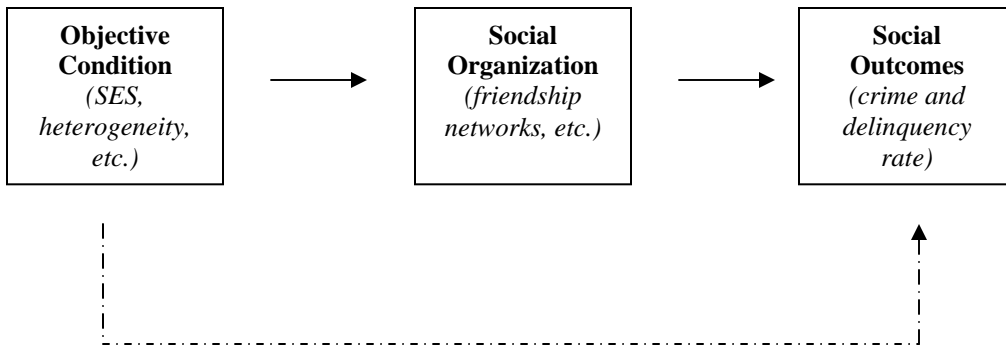


Figure 2: Perception-based Model of Social Organization

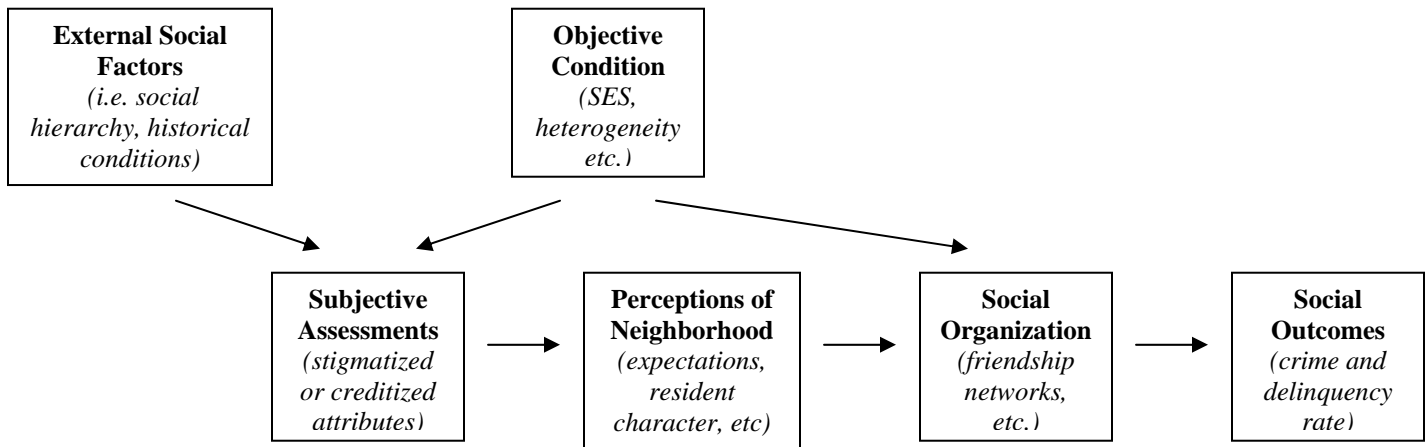


Table 1: Mean Neighborhood Desirability Ratings

	“Good” label	No label	“Bad” label	Total
High quality	5.75 (1.42)	6.00 (1.28)	5.26 (1.42)	5.67 (1.39)
Medium quality	5.32 (1.52)	4.88 (1.07)	4.92 (1.44)	5.03 (1.34)
Low quality	3.14 (1.7)	2.79 (1.06)	2.61 (1.44)	2.84 (1.41)
Total	4.76 (1.91)	4.55 (1.73)	4.28 (1.84)	

Standard deviations listed in parentheses.

Table 2: Mean Problem Ratings

	“Good” label	No label	“Bad” label	Total
High quality	4.25 (2.51)	3.95 (3.07)	6.36 (2.89)	4.86 (2.97)
Medium quality	6.27 (4.12)	6.62 (3.63)	6.36 (3.41)	6.42 (3.67)
Low quality	8.10 (2.40)	8.09 (3.53)	9.40 (2.96)	8.51 (3.04)
Total	6.09 (3.45)	6.33 (3.78)	7.27 (3.37)	

Standard deviations listed in parentheses. Minimum possible problem rating is 0, with a maximum possible score of 14.

Table 3: Mean Safety Ratings

	“Good” label	No label	“Bad” label	Total
High quality	6.00 (1.14)	5.77 (1.58)	5.00 (2.14)	5.60 (1.69)
Medium quality	4.80 (1.61)	5.00 (1.41)	4.36 (1.71)	4.72 (1.58)
Low quality	3.65 (1.57)	3.00 (1.41)	2.82 (1.68)	3.14 (1.57)
Total	4.07 (1.03)	4.57 (1.85)	4.07 (2.03)	

Standard deviations listed in parentheses. Minimum possible safety rating is 1, with a maximum rating of 7.

Table 4: Model Comparison

	Problems		Safety		Existing Organization		Likely Involvement	
	Beta	Adjusted R-square	Beta	Adjusted R-square	Beta	Adjusted R-square	Beta	Adjusted R-square
Model 1: <i>Objective Neighborhood Quality</i>	-.41***	0.164	.53***	.274	.33***	0.101	.18***	0.028
Model 2: <i>Neighborhood Rating</i>	-.44***	0.187	.56***	.311	.47***	0.214	.29**	0.078
Model 3: <i>Perceived Organization</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	.53***	0.276

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .001$

Appendix A: Neighborhood Images

High Neighborhood Quality:



Medium Neighborhood Quality:



Low Neighborhood Quality:



Appendix B:

Participant Characteristics

	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Total Number</i>
<i>Family Income</i>		
None-\$19,999	3.3%	7
\$20,000-39,999	9.9	21
\$40,000-59,999	14.1	30
\$60,000-99,999	17.5	37
\$100,000-150,000	17	36
\$150,000 or more	26.9	57
Don't know	11.3	24
<i>Housing Type</i>		
Apartment	9.4%	20
Condominium	3.3	7
House	81.6	173
Other	5.7	12
<i>Residential Location</i>		
Rural area/ farm	5.7%	12
Small city or town	21.7	46
Suburb near large city	45.3	96
Large city	26.9	57
<i>Racial Background</i>		
Asian	10%	21
Black	25.7	54
Latino	4.8	10
White	55.7	118
Other	3.3	7

Appendix D:

Scale Items and Correlations

Neighborhood Problems Items:

Prompt: The following is a list of problems some communities face. **For each item, indicate how much of a problem you believe it is within the neighborhood pictured above: *Big problem, small problem, not a problem.***

- 1) People don't get involved in efforts to improve the community.
- 2) Too many unsupervised children and teenagers.
- 3) Dirty streets and sidewalks.
- 4) People saying insulting things or bothering people as they walk down the street.
- 5) No volunteer community organizations are present.
- 6) Teenagers hanging around on corners or in streets.
- 7) Adults arguing in public.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.628	.626	7

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	People don't get involved in efforts to improve the community	Too many unsupervised children and teenagers	Dirty streets and sidewalks	People saying insulting things or bothering people as they walk down the street	No volunteer community organizations are present	Teenagers hanging around on corners or in streets	Adults arguing in public
People don't get involved in efforts to improve the community	1.000	.137	.179	.141	.130	.161	.003
Too many unsupervised children and teenagers	.137	1.000	.220	.224	.095	.232	.402
Dirty streets and sidewalks	.179	.220	1.000	.259	-.030	.245	.276
People saying insulting things or bothering people as they walk down the street	.141	.224	.259	1.000	.088	.380	.370
No volunteer community organizations are present	.130	.095	-.030	.088	1.000	.050	.120
Teenagers hanging around on corners or in streets	.161	.232	.245	.380	.050	1.000	.375
Adults arguing in public	.003	.402	.276	.370	.120	.375	1.000

The covariance matrix is calculated and used in the analysis.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
People don't get involved in efforts to improve the community	5.30	10.717	.210	.092	.629
Too many unsupervised children and teenagers	5.51	9.545	.389	.193	.574
Dirty streets and sidewalks	5.63	9.926	.334	.152	.592
People saying insulting things or bothering people as they walk down the street	6.02	9.636	.440	.228	.560
No volunteer community organizations are present	5.42	11.050	.124	.043	.657
Teenagers hanging around on corners or in streets	5.73	9.254	.430	.232	.559
Adults arguing in public	5.78	9.050	.469	.318	.545

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
6.56	12.665	3.559	7

Existing Neighborhood Organization Items:

Prompt: The following are statements that could be made about this neighborhood. **Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each one:** *Agree strongly, agree somewhat, agree slightly, disagree slightly, disagree somewhat, disagree strongly*

- 1) When people are away from home, they can count on their neighbors to keep their eyes open for possible trouble. (**Norms_1**)
- 2) The people in this neighborhood work together to solve problems. (**Norms_2**)
- 3) When a problem arises in this neighborhood, it is better not to get involved. (**Norms_3**; reverse coded)
- 4) Most people keep to themselves and do not talk or visit much with other people in this neighborhood. (**Norms_4**; reverse coded)
- 5) This is a neighborhood where people help each other. (**Norms_5**)
- 6) Residents within this neighborhood probably do not trust one another. (**Norms_6**; reverse coded)
- 7) This is a tightly-knit community. (**Norms_7**)
- 8) People in this community know each other well enough to recognize when outsiders are present. (**Norms_8**)
- 9) The people in this neighborhood probably do not have many interests and values in common with one another. (**Norms_9**; reverse coded)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.856	.860	9

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Norms_1	Norms_2	Norms_3	Norms_4	Norms_5	Norms_6	Norms_7	Norms_8	Norms_9
Norms_1	1.000	.666	.347	.369	.504	.460	.533	.354	.340
Norms_2	.666	1.000	.465	.457	.606	.469	.614	.368	.280
Norms_3	.347	.465	1.000	.384	.371	.368	.346	.211	.259
Norms_4	.369	.457	.384	1.000	.506	.366	.498	.290	.358
Norms_5	.504	.606	.371	.506	1.000	.519	.565	.300	.291
Norms_6	.460	.469	.368	.366	.519	1.000	.402	.202	.375
Norms_7	.533	.614	.346	.498	.565	.402	1.000	.467	.302
Norms_8	.354	.368	.211	.290	.300	.202	.467	1.000	.414
Norms_9	.340	.280	.259	.358	.291	.375	.302	.414	1.000

The covariance matrix is calculated and used in the analysis.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Norms_1	30.33	41.971	.645	.502	.833
Norms_2	30.56	42.841	.725	.610	.827
Norms_3	30.46	44.109	.486	.275	.851
Norms_4	30.61	42.772	.578	.377	.841
Norms_5	30.32	44.699	.667	.506	.834
Norms_6	30.11	44.591	.562	.383	.842
Norms_7	30.90	42.432	.683	.523	.830
Norms_8	30.22	44.635	.459	.316	.854
Norms_9	29.71	46.279	.468	.300	.851

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
34.15	54.470	7.380	9

Potential Involvement Items

Prompt: What is the likelihood that you would engage in each of the activities *if you were a resident of this neighborhood*? Very likely, somewhat likely, neither likely nor unlikely, somewhat unlikely, very unlikely

- 1) Join a social organization (**Involve_1**)
- 2) Discipline local youth if they were misbehaving (**Involve_2**)
- 3) Visit neighbors (**Involve_3**)
- 4) Make friends with other residents of the neighborhood (**Involve_4**)
- 5) Join a neighborhood watch group (**Involve_5**)
- 6) Make conversation with other residents that you encounter on the street (**Involve_6**)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.821	.831	6

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	Join a social organization (Involve_1)	Discipline local youth if they were misbehaving (Involve_2)	Visit neighbors (Involve_3)	Make friends with other residents of the neighborhood (Involve_4)	Join a neighborhood watch group (Involve_5)	Make conversation with other residents that you encounter on the street (Involve_6)
Join a social organization (Involve_1)	1.000	.416	.562	.528	.433	.355
Discipline local youth if they were misbehaving (Involve_2)	.416	1.000	.396	.426	.340	.363
Visit neighbors (Involve_3)	.562	.396	1.000	.769	.293	.553
Make friends with other residents of the neighborhood (Involve_4)	.528	.426	.769	1.000	.377	.633
Join a neighborhood watch group (Involve_5)	.433	.340	.293	.377	1.000	.304
Make conversation with other residents that you encounter on the street (Involve_6)	.355	.363	.553	.633	.304	1.000

The covariance matrix is calculated and used in the analysis.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Join a social organization	16.67	16.569	.619	.420	.785
Discipline local youth if they were misbehaving	17.14	16.541	.509	.262	.812
Visit neighbors	16.28	16.570	.686	.636	.772
Make friends with other residents of the neighborhood	15.96	16.242	.739	.673	.762
Join a neighborhood watch group	16.87	17.038	.455	.248	.825
Make conversation with other residents that you encounter on the street	15.57	17.978	.579	.424	.796

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
19.70	23.386	4.836	6

