

# Strangers in the Neighborhood: Violence and Neighborhood Boundaries

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## Abstract

New Orleans experienced elevated rates of violent crime throughout the thirty years between 1985 and 2015. Violence was disproportionately represented in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. This study explores the lived experiences of residents from one such neighborhood, using individual interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The data indicate that neighborhood boundaries vacillated between rigidly defensive and porous, which impacted residents' ability to enact collective efficacy and thus to create a milieu that either positively or negatively influenced the likelihood of violence. With a long history of institutional and social neglect, the community initially viewed outsiders as invaders which resulted in rigidly defended boundaries. As the community emerged from social marginalization and was able to enact collective efficacy, its boundaries became more porous and resources flowed into the community. As a result, violence decreased, further enhancing collective efficacy and boundary porosity in a virtuous cycle. This suggests that crime prevention and response models that engage residents and decrease marginalization may decrease cynicism, open boundaries, and improve collective efficacy, thereby reducing neighborhood violence.

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**Introduction**

In January of 2002, a seventeen-year-old young man was shot in front of a corner store in the Hollygrove neighborhood of New Orleans (*The Times Picayune*, 2002). Just months away from graduating high school, he had returned to visit friends from the days before his mother moved him to a safer community. As he emerged from the store, shooting erupted and he was used as a human shield. He was shot, dropped onto the sidewalk, and the intended target jumped into an escape vehicle. The corner was a crime hotspot and the location of several other violent eruptions both before and after his death.

In the years between 1985 and 2015, New Orleans averaged 236.58 murders annually ranging between a low of 27.1 murders per 100,000 residents in 1985 to a high of 94.7 in 2007, which put it among the highest rates nationally (FBI 2015; Lane and Bullington 2016). The majority of the city's homicide victims and their murderers were young, African American males (Wellford, Bond, and Goodison 2011). The homicides were disproportionately concentrated in a handful of the city's seventy-two defined neighborhoods (The Data Center 2017). These neighborhoods shared demographic characteristics: a majority African American population, mean income below the city average, a higher percentage of those living in poverty as compared with the city's average, and high numbers of vacant homes (The Data Center 2017).

Hollygrove is one of these neighborhoods: 93.9 percent of its residents were African American, mean income was \$33,113, 49.3 percent rented their homes, 32.9 percent of the housing units were unoccupied, 32.4 percent of residents earned less than the city's average, and 18.4 percent of residents achieved less than a high school diploma (The Data Center 2017). Hollygrove also had a reputation for lethal violence. New Orleans Police Department statistics record eighty-one shootings in the neighborhood and twenty-four homicides between 2010 and 2015. All of the identified aggressors and victims were African Americans, 95.5 percent of the aggressors and 88.8 percent of the victims were male, 73 percent of the aggressors were younger than twenty-three years, as were 56 percent of the victims (New Orleans Police Department Second District Crime Statistics).

Much research identifies a set of factors often associated with violent crime in such urban settings (Wilson 1987; Wacquant 2008; Sampson 2012): the neighborhoods contain high levels of concentrated disadvantage and social dislocation; they tend to be socially cut off from the more affluent parts

of the city; residents feel unable to reduce violent crime, either by working together or by engaging the assistance of formal authorities; residents become distrustful of those outside the neighborhood who either bring crime into the neighborhood or of the authorities or higher-status outsiders who do not seem to have the best interests of the neighborhood at heart. These factors form a vicious circle that makes it difficult for residents to engage in strategies or form partnerships that might reduce violent crime.

In this article, we describe how recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina provided an unanticipated catalyst that helped break into this vicious circle and led to strategies that residents hoped would reduce violent crime. Long-term and newer residents partnered with recovery nonprofits and improved their links with city and law enforcement officials and worked to shut down gathering places for persistent illicit activity and violence. Success in this initiative contributed to residents' increased sense of efficacy and ability to work with each other and partner with outsiders who were able to bring needed resources and contacts. This in turn contributed to increased trust and led to less sense of social isolation in the city. Residents sought to turn a vicious circle into a virtuous circle of greater trust, cooperation, and enforcement of informal norms—within and across neighborhood boundaries—that residents felt might reduce violent crime and lead to greater opportunities. This development recalls Carr's (2003) description of a "new parochialism," in which neighborhood organizations partner with public authorities to shut down gathering places for criminal activity, like a troublesome local bar.

Macrosociological theories often seek to explain violent crime by exploring the phenomenon via statistical comparison of neighborhoods (Sampson 2012; Kubrin and Wo 2016; Weil et al. 2019). The current study attempts to deepen our understanding of these causal mechanisms by means of an ethnographic examination of the intra-neighborhood factors that can influence the incidence of neighborhood violence. We study violent crime in a single neighborhood via the lived experiences of those whose daily lives are impacted by neighborhood violence. Our central insight is that the boundary porosity of a neighborhood either facilitates or limits the flow of resources into the community from outside. When distrust is high within a neighborhood, residents may seek to defend the community against outside influences, but this may also cut off access to needed resources. When linkages were established across neighborhood lines in the context of Katrina recovery, distrust of outsiders abated, resources could flow in, and residents could cooperate with each other and with outsiders to more effectively address the sources of violent crime. This unplanned development suggests intentional strategies that may be available for other neighborhoods facing these challenges, and our findings suggest new avenues of research into neighborhood-level violence.

In the following sections, we review the literature, outline our methodology and data, describe our rich ethnographic findings, and conclude with implications for theory development and policy.

## **Literature Review**

Wilson (1987) describes the development of concentrated disadvantage and social isolation in lower-income minority neighborhoods after the civil rights period, as middle-class African Americans moved out of segregated neighborhoods. Lower income blacks were left behind, but without the resources and network connections that middle-class residents helped provide. At the same time, white suburban flight reduced tax bases of major cities and left fewer resources to address neighborhood issues (Katz and Bradley 2013). A rising illegal drug trade contributed to other social dislocations and spurred a wave of violent crime. The resulting marginalization in many poor, minority neighborhoods prompted the emergence of an “us vs. them” mentality, especially regarding formal power structures as the police and city government (Kirk and Papachristos 2011) and cooperation with outside agents is diminished (Kirk and Matsuda 2011). Institutional neglect and legal cynicism create an atmosphere in which residents adapt by policing their own borders because of mistrust of outside agents.

Much research on violent crime builds on the social disorganization framework, which predicts that crime will be higher in neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated disadvantage, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility. These characteristics reduce the potential for community cohesion. Residents of neighborhoods with weaker community bonds are less likely to use or respond to informal means of social control and therefore are more likely to rely upon formal controls like law enforcement (Shaw and McKay 1969; Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Sampson 2012; Warner 2007). Weakened social controls create an environment in which criminals are free to act, further weakening social controls and creating more disorder. The implication is that outside intervention is required to reduce disorder and thus prevent violence.

For Sampson (2012), social disorder leads to lowered collective efficacy or “the linkage of cohesion and trust among residents with shared expectations for intervening in support of neighborhood social control” (p. 127). Collective efficacy is further eroded by violent crime. When neighborhood residents perceive their neighborhood to be violent, they also perceive collective efficacy to be diminished (Duncan et al. 2003).

There are, however, neighborhoods that are highly organized and still show high levels of violent crime. The research of Venkatesh on gangs (2008)

and the informal economy (2006) found that some neighborhoods may be organized by groups whose subcultural value system ran counter to prosocial values and thus supported criminal undertakings. Others noted that a substantial portion of neighborhood-level crime was committed by residents who were socially embedded in the community and whose removal by incarceration may create a destabilizing effect on informal controls, especially as regards the mass incarceration of black men that led to single-parent families (Rose and Clear 1998; Alexander 2012). The system of network exchange and resulting obligations may also serve an organizing effect while increasing the social capital of offenders, thus shielding them from informal social controls, something that Browning, Feinberg, and Dietz (2004) referred to as negotiated coexistence. Moreover, quantitative research from New Orleans has shown that in-group (or bonding) social networks are associated with higher levels of violent crime, while out-group (or bridging) social networks are associated with lower levels of violent crime (Weil et al. 2019). That is, consistent with Wilson's (1987) theory, social ties may be strong within a high-crime neighborhood, but those residents tend to be socially isolated from other parts of the city. Thus, some high-crime neighborhoods may experience strong social cohesion, but with a different set of subcultural values forged in the crucible of institutional neglect and legal cynicism, and disconnection from lower-crime neighborhoods.

Anderson (1999) described a complex interplay between prosocial and subcultural values, proposing that neglected neighborhoods may be organized by values that are "sanctioned primarily by violence and the threat of violent retribution" (134) which become normative as greater numbers of urban youth adopt subcultural values to assure survival on the streets. Subcultural values are vehicles for establishing social identity, respect, and control (Kubrin 2005); are predictors of neighborhood violence for African American youth (Stewart, Simons, and Conger 2002); and correlate to a neighborhood's violent crime rate (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). Systemic neighborhood marginalization negatively impacts social institutions regulating norms and behaviors, thereby creating conditions under which communities resist institutional controls (Messner and Rosenfeld 1997). When residents trust formal control agents they are more likely to exercise and enforce prosocial values (Silver and Miller 2006), but when trust is low residents may adopt "a cultural orientation in which the law and agents of its enforcement are viewed as illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill-equipped to ensure public safety" (Kirk and Papachristos 2011, 1191). Isolation and marginalization by formal power structures creates a vacuum in which subcultural values proliferate and where trust of outside agents is diminished.

Carr (2003) offered a modification of the social disorganization approach in his description of a “new parochialism.” He argues that while social cohesion has declined in many neighborhoods, residents can still enforce informal social control and reduce crime by having their neighborhood organizations partner with city and law enforcement officials to shut down gathering places where illicit activity and violence occur. As we will see, this strategy is relevant for Hollygrove because shutting down a local bar produced one of the most successful actions that residents took to reduce violent crime in the period under consideration.

Much of this theory was developed in the context of Northern cities like Chicago or Philadelphia, but New Orleans presents an important variant of this picture. Lower-income minority neighborhoods in Southern cities like New Orleans often have strong internal social networks, large extended families, residential stability, and a strong cultural identity. This internal social cohesion was not always transferred from the South to Northern cities in the Great Migration (Stack 1974). Thus, the social displacement described in Northern cities may contrast with greater internal social cohesion in Southern cities like New Orleans. Yet this social cohesion often coexists with high levels of violent crime and distrust of outsiders, both of lower-income minorities from other neighborhoods and of higher-status political and law enforcement authorities. This reflects Lofland’s (1998) conclusion that those who are familiar are perceived as less dangerous than those who are strangers.

Thus, marginalization and social isolation may have somewhat different sources in a Southern city like New Orleans than Northern cities. Paradoxically, residential segregation was historically lower in Southern cities like New Orleans than Northern cities (Campanella 2006:313). Jim Crow laws kept Southern African Americans socially and economically subordinate, but did not necessarily separate them residentially. The white flight that followed school desegregation in the 1960s increased residential segregation in the South and heightened the marginalization and social isolation that already existed, but it did not necessarily reduce internal family and neighborhood cohesion as in the North. Yet if Northern and Southern cities may have differed in the strength of in-group bonding social networks, they may have both experienced similarly low out-group bridging social networks. That is, they shared similar marginalization and social isolation from the rest of their city, but for different historical reasons and with different degrees of internal social cohesion.

Indeed, New Orleans’ crime rates have historically been very high by national standards, which Adler (2015) and Voigt, Harper, and Thornton (2015) attribute to a history of discrimination and inequality. Thus, while Wilson (1996) notes the importance of deindustrialization for social dislocation in Northern cities, employment opportunities for New Orleans African

Americans had been severely limited even before the decline of employment at the port and in the comparatively small industrial sector. Here too, marginalization and social isolation may have been shared causes of violent crime in the Northern and Southern cities, while neighborhood social cohesion may have differed between the regions.

Finally, Hollygrove residents' defensive posture against perceived danger from outside the neighborhood may have somewhat different sources than scholars' descriptions of neighborhood defense against danger in mostly Northern settings. Thus, Suttles (1968) and DeSena (1990) describe defense of neighborhood boundaries in the context of ethnic competition for residential space in multiethnic cities, and Pattillo (1999) describes middle-class black defense against lower income African Americans in adjoining neighborhoods. By contrast, New Orleans has long seen violent competition among lower-income African American neighborhoods, and the situation in Hollygrove also presents much lower racial or class differences than these Northern studies. Likewise, Merry's (1981) descriptions in a Northern city of the dangers that neighbors perceive of each other also crosses race and class lines, and are notably absent among the lower-income black neighbors she describes. Again, perceptions of danger among Hollygrove residents concern, first, similar lower-income blacks from different neighborhoods but, second, also higher-status city and police authorities.

Thus, the situation we describe in New Orleans differs in several ways from accounts in Northern cities, except in one crucial respect. New Orleans resembles other cities in the marginalization and social isolation of its lower income African American neighborhoods from the rest of the city. That is, all these neighborhoods have in common low levels of bridging social networks. Reducing this social isolation by building bridging networks may be one of the most viable strategies open to these neighborhoods. As we describe below, such a change was catalyzed in Hollygrove during recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina, and it required a true partnership between neighborhood residents and outside change agents: it could not be imposed from the outside or from above.

## Research Question

The central question of the present study is, "What factors at the local level, from the perspective of local residents and key community leaders, contribute to high levels of violent crime in the Hollygrove neighborhood of New Orleans?" Rather than studying violence from a quantitative, macrosociological perspective that aggregates data from multiple communities, the study seeks to approach the issue from the viewpoint of those whose lives were

**Table 1.** Race, Gender, and Age of Study Participants.

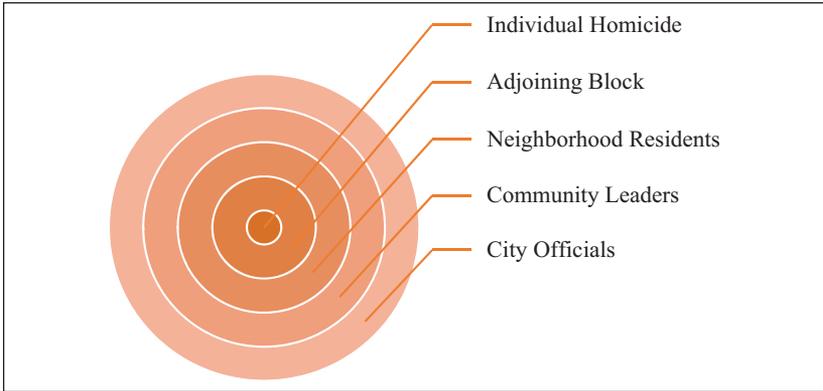
	Race, %		Gender, %		Age, years, %				
	Black	White	Male	Female	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	≥60
Individual interviews	88	12	68	32	20	20	20	24	16
Focus groups	81	19	31	69	25	13	6	6	50

most affected by neighborhood homicide and routine violence found in a single socioeconomically disadvantaged community, seeking to understand local knowledge frequently overlooked in criminological research. The goal is to bridge the gap between macrosociological research and the daily, lived experiences of those who cope with violence daily at the neighborhood level.

## Design and Methods

We use an ethnographic approach in this study, a qualitative research design with roots in cultural anthropology conducted in the early twentieth century (Creswell 2014). From an emic perspective, or “taking on the point of view of those being studied” (Babbie 2013, 301), this study followed the ethnographic tradition of understanding neighborhood violence through residents’ stories. Beginning with a single homicide that occurred near one of the neighborhood’s crime hotspots, the study used snowball sampling to gradually expand outward from the initial violent hotspot, to immediately adjoining neighbors, to nearby blocks, to residents more distant, to community leaders, and ultimately to city officials who understood the community, including law enforcement officers, political figures, and civic leaders.

Because a neighborhood social milieu has many elements that are visible primarily to insiders (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013), data collection employed qualitative, in-depth interviews and focus groups in order to “understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspective” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:24). Snowball sampling, “a process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects” (Babbie 2013, 191), was employed to identify potential informants. As can be seen from Table 1, these provided a diverse sample in terms of age, race, and gender, similar to the community’s makeup. Data collection occurred between July and September 2015 and included twenty-five in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with informants ranging in age from the early twenties to senior citizens who resided in the community for many years, plus three resident focus groups, the first with a group of three males in their early twenties, the second with a



**Figure 1.** Concentric circles of interviews in study.

group of seven neighborhood senior citizens, and a third with a group of six community leaders actively engaged in community development. Interviews were recorded either in the homes of the participants or in community spaces (a senior center and a youth-serving community center). To provide a broader perspective, several interviews were conducted with nonresidents, including two high-ranking police officers, two political appointees of the Mayor, and the neighborhood’s elected City Councilperson; these interviews occurred in the participant’s offices.

The initial interview took place with the surviving family member of a homicide victim, a widow in her midtwenties whose common-law husband was shot and killed leaving her to raise their five-year-old son as a single mother. She resided one half block from the corner store where many of the neighborhood’s murders occurred and was also raised in a home across the street from the store. Because the lead researcher grew up in Hollygrove and served as executive director of a community center there, he had unusual rapport with acquaintances who lived within a block or two of the corner store, forming a second circle of interviewees. Suggestions by these interviewees led to a third circle of residents living farther away, which allowed for a broader perspective of life in the community. The primary researcher’s connections to nonresident leaders with unique knowledge of Hollygrove provided the fifth circle of interviews. Finally, focus groups supplied information from groups beyond the snowball sample, broadening the data provided by individual participants (Figure 1).

Creswell (2014) proposed several strategies to ensure data validity in qualitative research on which this study relied, including data triangulation,

data checking by respondents, and oversight of the data collection process by outside observers, including three University of New Orleans professors in the Urban Studies department and one Tulane University expert on violence. Data reliability was implemented by taking detailed field notes, using a high-quality recording device, verbatim transcription and rechecking of interviews (Creswell 2013), and by creating memos to define codes and the process by which they were used (Creswell 2014). Data were hand-coded using deductive, inductive, and in vivo codes (Saldana 2013). Beginning with line-by-line descriptive coding for a first pass, we compiled 224 raw codes. A second pass aggregated these by similarity into 177 meta-codes. From these, two themes emerged that become findings for the current study: Outsiders as Invaders and Outsiders as Agents of Change. These will be explored in the next section. A specific example is a quote from a former drug dealer, "They started letting all the young people come back here, they'd come from all over, everywhere." This was initially coded as "people who don't belong," but on the second pass became "outsiders who cause trouble" and then became a subtheme of "outsiders as invaders."

## **Findings**

At the time of the study, Hollygrove experienced a long history of abandonment by the city's power structures, creating a climate in which residents concluded they must fend for themselves. The resulting cynicism led to a perceived need to differentiate between those who were "from" the neighborhood and those who were not. Strong internal bonding networks became an important facet of maintaining neighborhood order and safety, while limiting the neighbors' ability to create bridging networks externally. On one hand, the ability to distinguish between insiders and outsiders allowed residents to more readily differentiate between safe people and troublemakers. On the other, it constricted opportunities for an influx of new people and ideas that could facilitate new opportunities for change. The perceived need to rigidify neighborhood boundaries was most pronounced when residents experienced low bridging relationships and high levels of marginalization. When the community later experienced increased social capital and the capacity to enact bridging networks, boundaries became more diffuse. Tension existed between the need to protect their neighborhood against invaders with bad intentions and the need for those who could bring much-needed resources to help them emerge from their marginalized condition; it was not always easy to determine which outsider actors were negative and which were positive.

Experiencing what Wacquant (2008) has defined as advanced marginality, Hollygrove extended this "us versus them" to formal power structures such

as the police and city government. Two New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) officials described law enforcement's relationship with the community as "an occupying force." A city government leader, describing a potential rebuilding project in the neighborhood, tearfully recounted her experience of "the pain for the first time of black people who have lived a life of being lied to, to the point where they would insist on leaving an unusable community center in place because they thought the dollars to replace it would be stolen from them." This mistrust had deep historical roots based on cynicism developed in the face of structural and institutional neglect.

This distrust extended to renters entering the neighborhood who were not thought to share residents' concern for the community. Neighbors perceived a need to defend themselves against individuals who did not care for their property or who caused violence, something that became more pronounced in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The widespread devastation of the community's housing stock led to significant abandonment by long-standing residents who had evacuated and decided not to return. Tameka, a long-time homeowner noted: "A lot of people from before didn't return but a lot of new families, new people are coming to the neighborhood." The challenge residents faced, according to Dr. T, a physician, was that newer residents "don't seem as concerned for the community as the older senior citizens do." There was a widespread sense, according to many participants in the study, that newcomers were not concerned about the safety and well-being of the community and thus were not to be trusted.

Thus, residents perceived two types of mistrusted outsiders, and their first response was to defend the neighborhood against them. The first group was "invaders," new neighbors who did not share a positive interest in Hollygrove's well-being. The second was "changers" who brought new ideas for neighborhood improvement. While invaders were universally perceived as negative, changers received a mixed review, especially in light of positive developments that occurred in Hollygrove after Katrina.

Hollygrove was once an intermixture of working-class Italians and African Americans built upon a former plantation. The white flight of the 1970s transformed the neighborhood, leaving behind abandoned businesses, producing a plethora of absentee landlords, and changing the racial mix of the community. Freeman (2006) described such communities as "neighborhoods excluded from the mainstream of American life" (188), places set apart by abandonment of those with means and the businesses that served them. Massey and Denton (1993) concluded that marginalized communities like Hollygrove represented "the key institutional arrangement ensuring the continued subordination of blacks in the United States" (18). Sampson (2012) noted that "the racial inequality in the American city cannot be understood

absent a direct consideration of the role of spatially inscribed social advantage and disadvantage” (373). Charles described Hollygrove’s period of white flight and his perception of the impact:

It used to be pretty much mixed . . . now it’s predominately black. They used to have black and white people back here but it got so bad with the drugs and the dog-eat-dog mentality that people moved away. . . . I guess they didn’t want to be in that type of environment. [It] tends to put you in the frame of mind that you always on the defense, you know, you always watching yourself.

His statement described both the defensive posture of the neighborhood vis-à-vis violence and its connection to white flight.

In the 1980s, the crack epidemic exerted a strong negative impact on Hollygrove. The focus group of twenty-something males connected this to neighborhood violence:

M2: Once crack cocaine came, it had messed up a lot of black communities.

M1: . . . Once this got into the neighborhood they started fighting to rob you and that’s when people started robbing, started robbing with guns.

M2: Yeah, you’re talking about the crackheads, like, when habits changed, at first when they wanted the drug they might . . .

M1: (interrupting) Like in the late eighties, early nineties, that little ten-twelve-year era was when everything just sunk into this. . . .

M2: If you go up to any black man who’s really conscious of the problems that’s going on in cities across the world, he’s going to name crack cocaine as one of the main reasons.

Highly addictive and relatively inexpensive, crack cocaine played a role in neighborhood violence, creating a highly lucrative market. Bourgois (2003) addressed the 1980’s advent of the urban crack epidemic by concluding the drug “tapped directly into the entrepreneurial urge that is such an integral facet of the American Dream” (75). Neighborhoods like Hollygrove, he noted, were economically and socially marginalized because of “the restructuring of the world economy by multinational corporations, finance capital, and digital electronic technology, as well as the exhaustion of social democratic models for public sector intervention on behalf of the poor” (319), which served to escalate inequality. In this context, concluded Anderson (1999), “crack has become a seemingly permanent fixture of life, and dealing is a way to earn a living—even, for a few, to become rich” (121).

One senior connected the influx of drug-related violence to the impact of the Vietnam war, citing the emotional toll of war, coupled with the wide availability of drug use to soldiers overseas, as another explanation for neighborhood violence:

During the Civil Rights era, people didn't have any kind of compunction about gettin' out there and riskin' the wrath of the Klan and all that kinda stuff. But Vietnam crippled a lot of people. And I think a lot of people got off on the violence, and they brought that back home with 'em. And that's when things really started. And then they'd bring drugs in like nobody's business. . . . They used to ship drugs into this country in bodies of GIs. I know . . . and then over there drugs were accessible. So I'm gonna make a junkie out you when I'm teachin' you to shoot and kill people. So, so Black men came back wounded by Vietnam in two ways: exposed to violence and more prone to violence and addicted to drugs and bringin' drugs back. And those two things came back to the neighborhoods.

An NOPD official, explaining the interconnection between drugs and violence, framed the issue thus:

You can think about it one of three ways. If I'm buying or selling narcotics, I have to protect my business, which can result in violence. If I'm using narcotics, I usually make a lot of poor choices on a lot of levels that can also lead to violence. And if I'm not using it and want to break in, then I'm willing to use violence.

Martin, a neighborhood drug dealer, explained this from his perspective:

You sellin' \$20 grams and you making money. Off an ounce of good weed, like purple, could make you something like 5-something. So you boomin' off that. They see you steadily got clientele coming and you showing the love and they like, "This dude got such and such and such and such. He doin' this, that and a third, you know, let's go get him. And what you really isn't learning, you might find two ounces of weed, some mags and maybe eight or nine ounces in a stack, a stack is a thousand. Other than that you done killed somebody right behind something petty.

An attempt to combat this was the Reagan-era war on drugs. Alexander (2012) contended that the battle was differentially waged in African American neighborhoods like Hollygrove, further marginalizing such communities. A city government official summarized the impact in Hollygrove, saying:

I begin to believe that so much of it is drug and turf related and that the war on drugs has created wars in our neighborhoods and among our community members. And the more I read, and the more I look at it, what we've done by so horribly criminalizing drug use is that we've driven it underground; we've created the market of illegal drugs, and people become criminals to keep their turf. And the way to keep your turf best is to be really, really violent so that people are afraid to challenge you. And then if people do challenge you, to be really violent in response. I think that's what we're seeing everywhere: violence over the drugs, violence over the turf, or violence to keep people afraid of challenging the turf.

The battle lines, with agents of formal control on one side, and neighborhood residents on the other, were unclear to residents, some of whom expressed a degree of sympathy for those living on the societal margins. Tameka, an African American homeowner in her forties, opined a sympathetic view of dealers and users:

I think what prompts people to kill is drugs. Poverty, along with that goes unemployment. Sometimes it's just people trying to feed their families, you know, "I gotta rob because I need to feed my kids. I don't have money, I don't have a job." Sometimes it's a guy on drugs that's trying to get jobs and he doesn't have any money and he doesn't have a job. He can't hold a job cuz he's on drugs. So he's robbing somebody and in the process he might kill the person because the person either fought back or just hapstance.

Furthermore, police activity to combat drug-related violence resulted in cynicism toward the NOPD. One resident recalled this as a period when "our police department wasn't worth shit 'cause they had a whole lot of crooks in the police department . . . a whole bunch of rednecks." A young male angrily suggested "they don't care about me, f them too." The result of the war on drugs, suggested officers, was that police were seen more as "an occupying force" than as allies in violence prevention. Thus, by the time Hurricane Katrina brought widespread devastation to the Hollygrove community, the marginalization and lack of social capital experienced by neighborhood residents resulted in a deep mistrust of outsiders and a perceived need to defend their community from encroachment; bridging networks had widely deteriorated.

At the same time, many long-term residents maintained strong bonding relationships within the community. These ties proved a mixed blessing. On one hand, they helped residents defend the neighborhood against perceived threats; but on the other hand, they impeded the development of ties to outsiders who could bring in needed resources. Phil described internal bonding in light of personal friendships:

I think most of that stuff [violence] be people from out of the neighborhood coming through the neighborhood. Now you take guys like me and Joe . . . like Robert and all that. Man, we just like to get together and have fun, you know, and take care of your families and stuff like that.

A member of the senior focus group contrasted her perception of positive internal networks with outsiders who brought violence:

We were socializing during the week and they had crawfish boils and all like that, just to get business and stuff and everybody got along fine and I'm thinking the most problems started like when . . . some of them came around here along with the drugs and stuff, that's what started all the commotion. And then they kept congregating around here at Big Time Tips . . . that's when all the killing started too, it looked like it was one a week; every two weeks somebody was getting killed, I'm thinking that was the turning point.

However, the internal bonding, coupled with distrust of outsiders, contributed to a perceived need to internally protect the neighborhood against violence. A twenty-something lifelong community resident and college student, whose brother had been arrested for armed robbery, observed: "I feel like violence, gun violence in black communities is something that has been structured, it has almost been formulated, you have an oppressive system," later adding "you're in a neighborhood, you don't have rights, you have to fend for yourself." Her conclusion was that in the face of abandonment, residents of communities like Hollygrove were left to defend themselves.

Katrina's floodwater inundated every Hollygrove home, necessitating complete evacuation of the community over several months. The first to return were homeowners with a vested interest in seeing the neighborhood rebuilt better than before, many of them retired senior citizens with a long history in the community and without school-age children enrolled at schools at evacuation sites. Later residents would include those who had not lived in Hollygrove previously, including residents displaced from public housing complexes. Considered outsiders, they were distrusted and thought to be a source of neighborhood violence. Likewise, outside agents committed to the neighborhood's rebuilding and improvement were also met with initial distrust and resistance. When bridging networks and increased social capital improved, however, residents were able to effectively bridge networks with outsiders to envision and enact a significant violence-reduction strategy. In other words, Hollygrove's historical marginalization created conditions under which both strong internal bonding networks and high violence coexisted. As the community was able to network externally, bridging to outside agencies and resources, violence was decreased in a portion of the community.

## People from Outside the Neighborhood: Resident Perceptions of Invaders

Residents categorized tension between insiders and outsiders in two ways: first, between stable homeowners and post-Katrina, transient renters; secondly between long-term residents and those thought to have come to the neighborhood to cause harm. One longstanding homeowner connected danger to renters unacclimated to neighborhood mores:

The areas that are more dangerous probably are the people who are renters. The few people that you have back here that own their home, I'm thinking they're the safer areas. I probably would have to say that those people are renters, haven't lived in the neighborhood that long like some of us have. And you know, it goes back to the same thing, the parents start out on Section 8 or whatever and the children kinda follow in their footsteps because they think that that's okay and that's the way it should be.

Other homeowners with longevity in Hollygrove expressed concern about an influx of new renters displaced from public housing closed after Katrina and replaced with mixed-income properties. Gardner, Irwin, and Peterson (2009) found the federal government's HOPE VI program had begun to enact "highly punitive policies to 'manage' people who remained in public housing, including a community service requirement and a 'one strike and you're out' policy that set stern rules on residents' behavior" (104). In the following exchange of seniors from a focus group, the members expressed this sentiment:

S1: These are places that they brought people from other areas and put them back there. There are times when they have parties and they have all this loud music, oh 10 or 11 o'clock at night and all like that and my neighbor say, "Oh this is not a project, this is my home," and she called and reported and I haven't heard that noise since then. So it's the outsiders, people that are invading, the young people that are invading the neighborhood that's . . .

S2: My cousin live in Hollygrove and have a party for my seven-year-old by my cousin house, so all the rest of the kids they know my (*indistinguishable*) and they having a party because they can't have it where they live in . . .

S3: (*interrupting*) in those new projects.

S2: (*resuming*) in the new projects, they cannot have it. So if your cousin live in Hollygrove but she say, "Oh, you can come and have a party in the yard," so people migrate to the party. And when they have a children party, it's an adult party anyways. So they goes to two or three o'clock

in the morning, although the children are asleep somewhere . . . they can't have it in the project 'cause they knew they'd get put out.

These invaders were considered disruptive to the quality of life, and a precursor to trouble. The transience of such renters was considered problematic, as expressed by twenty-something homeowner Eldridge:

It's just a certain types of people that live in those areas. A lot of people rent properties and stuff like that and it's a lot of people that move in and out, in and out. Like in this neighborhood (noting the section where he lives) it's not too many people that move in and out. I think the only person that moved in is on that duplex on the corner and they've been there a few years. I think when you constantly have different people you don't know what kind of element you adding into that community and I think it's like lower income people that's poor and they'll be more likely if there's so many people living in one household, it's a higher chance of the wrong person, the wrong type of person. You know, you got some people have like 10, 15 people living in one house.

Longtime Hollygrove renters, like Caroline, shared homeowners' perceptions connecting danger to newer residents, who said "it feels more dangerous because the people that is doing the crime, I don't know the people," adding "so I don't want to stay anywhere in the neighborhood has a lot of new people. I know the elderly people that stay back here but they got a lot of new people that I don't know and that's what I'm afraid of."

Renters, however, were not the sole cause of danger in the minds of Hollygrove residents. Many thought outsiders intentionally came to the neighborhood to cause problems. Residents mentioned three problematic things that outsiders were thought to bring: guns, drugs, and visitors to neighborhood alcoholic beverage outlets (ABOs).

Several interviewees presumed the guns in the community were being imported by outsiders. Claude, a senior homeowner who lived in Hollygrove most of his life asked, "where the hell they getting all these goddamn guns from?" One of the community leaders, a forty-something director of a non-profit agency, lamented the widespread availability of guns, especially in the hands of younger people:

I cannot understand for the life of me, where are all the guns and ammunition coming from? If we're talking about 14 to 18 year olds, where are they getting these weapons? How are there so many weapons on the street, and then, not just have the weapons but to continually get ammunition for them? Where is this stuff coming from? How you just get that? Constantly. And we poor . . . bullets are not cheap.

In 1998 a former Mayor of New Orleans, Marc Morial, lost a high-profile lawsuit against gun manufactures for making guns too easily available. One of the seniors recalled that effort, explaining the loss had long-term implications for the safety of communities like Hollygrove:

You've had drug addicts in the community forever, however in more recent years not only did the drugs come in but guns came in. As poor black people we have not the means for getting in the guns and drugs. So somebody is financing the guns coming into our neighborhood and the drugs and it's not us. And they've got our children with the guns and the drugs, with the violence, you see. Marc Morial tried to see if he could have some legislation about not having the guns or going after the gun manufacturers. Well as you know there's a very strong gun lobby that prevents this. And not only do we have this here but you can go around to all the urban areas in this country and you have this violence, this shooting of people on a regular basis. I don't know why you'd ever let 30 people a day get killed by gun violence and that's a big upcry when we have an unfortunate police officer because someone didn't frisk somebody properly. You had this poor girl that was shot, she wasn't the intended victim but a bullet doesn't know who's the intended victim and who isn't, you see. So part of it goes to the gun manufacturers and the gun lobby and of course they say the second amendment right, the right to bear arms.

The twenty-something males knew how and where to buy a gun as well as the purchase price, \$100 for someone familiar to the seller and \$250 for a stranger. Purchased legally, the cost of a firearm was twice that amount. Since there were no gun shops in Hollygrove, residents thought guns were imported to the neighborhood by outsiders who profited from their sales. One community leader noted that little was being done to trace the source of these guns, implying that gun violence in Hollygrove was of little concern to agents of formal control:

We make guns, we gotta track 'em, you know? It's just crazy. Ammunition is tracked, it has tracking numbers on them and all that stuff. So, how do we get it? Fourteen-year-olds carrying guns, really? Had to come from somewhere.

Law enforcement officials and residents both stated that neighborhood gun violence was linked to outsiders entering the community to both purchase and sell drugs. One senior, commenting on this, stated "I think it's the people who don't live in this neighborhood who come and conduct their business in this neighborhood and when it goes wrong they're not interconnected with over the river because it happened over here." These words reflected an understanding that outsiders brought guns and drugs to the neighborhood,

benefited from the profits, but escaped culpability for the violent neighborhood results.

In addition to the widespread availability of guns as a source of violence, residents also connected violence to outsiders who came into the community to purchase drugs. One senior described drug deals happening across the street from her home, “when I was living in the front of my house, my kitchen was right there on General Ogden, you would be surprised at how many white people come back here, make their transaction and go back to their office.” A former neighborhood drug dealer described this from the perspective of the seller:

They got a bunch of drug dealers out here hanging. He has his own clientele. And everybody be dealing with different people from different neighborhoods. I don't sell to just people in my neighborhood, I sell to people from outside the neighborhood. So they got people from other neighborhoods coming back to come score so they know where it's at.

Even law enforcement officials acknowledged this as did a police officer who stated, “You have some great people back there, a lot of great people, but you also have some really violent people that are still either anchored back there or, 'cause of whatever reason, have left the neighborhood and they no longer live there but historically have done their violence there, they have trafficked in narcotics there, and they still come back to that area to commit those crimes.” Many attributed the supply, sales, and purchase of drugs to outsiders. When violence erupted, it differentially impacted the residents; the outsiders could leave while the residents remained to absorb both the impact of the violence and the enduring reputation of the neighborhood as a dangerous place.

Residents stated that violence related to guns and drugs was more prevalent at neighborhood ABOs such as Big Time Tips, a Hollygrove violence hotspot. Charles lived on the same block as this bar and was impacted by the escalating violence that took place there. He recounted its demise:

These new people come back here, you don't even know 'em. Before the hurricane, it was really bad. They done got completely out of hand. They always had drugs back here but it wasn't centralized, it wasn't rampant. But it got to the point where they had Big Time Tips, before that used to be Margie's Bar, on that corner, on the corner of Eagle and Edinburgh . . . every now and then you'd have a couple of skirmishes but you didn't have all that killing and all that dope. Everything was okay, was low profile. You really didn't hear too much about it. But when Eli got the place, they started letting all the young people come back here, they'd come from all over, everywhere.

His explanation for violence was the presence of youth from other neighborhoods. Angela lived on the same block, across the street from Tips and recounted how violence abated after neighbors banded together with outside agents to close the bar:

When the bar shut down, there was that congregation of people weren't coming there. You didn't have an influx from all the different areas 'cause it was a very popular bar 'cause you can be there and participate in all kinds of activity and you weren't being shut down from it. You had an inside scoop and there was always somebody from outside. "Hey man, here come the police" and informs somebody. And things would cool down, calm down, flush down, whatever, you know? So you didn't have people just coming in the neighborhood any more like that, certainly not that time of night. So that automatically changed the area.

In her recollection, the bar had become a staging area for drug sales by and to outsiders. The closure of the ABO meant that outsiders were no longer entering the neighborhood at that location to participate in the illicit economy that she surmised was organized specifically around Tips.

These respondents considered outsiders, rather than Hollygrove residents, to be as important as location in their understanding of neighborhood violence. While drug use and sales had a long history in Hollygrove, residents understood violence to occur when people from outside became involved. This hinted at collective efficacy, as neighbors saw those with a stake in the community, even those involved in the illicit economy, as less likely to engage in violence inside the community because of the bonding network they experienced. Outsiders, on the other hand, were not thought to be bonded to the neighborhood, bringing guns, drugs and violence, then escaping to other places and avoiding the ill effects their actions were perceived to cause.

This view of outsiders as primary agents of neighborhood violence is important to understanding how residents perceive the etiology of neighborhood violence. Several participants in the study acknowledged participating in the violence so it was apparent that outsiders were not the sole cause. There appeared to be two reasons for this. First, residents differentiated between the motives of those engaged in the subculture and violence of the underground economy, attributing insider involvement to economic necessity and outsider involvement to predatory motives. Second, resident desire to defend their neighborhood required an ability to define who belonged and who did not. When formal controls did not serve the neighborhood adequately, neighborhood boundaries became more rigid and residents saw outsiders as the primary threat to community safety.

## *We're Gonna Fight That: Outsiders as Agents of Change*

Resident distrust was not limited to these invaders but also extended to outsiders wishing to introduce new ideas for community change. Hollygrove residents resisted change, expressing concern about outside interventions that could lessen a tenuous hold on community control. One example cited earlier was resistance to the razing of a flooded community center and the rebuilding of a new one. Others connected neighborhood violence to outsiders who profited from their misfortune. One resident even suspected a plot to devalue Hollygrove property in an effort to reclaim strategic land in the city center:

I think people are awake at night when we're sleepin' and tryin' to think about OK, what can we do to change the construction or whatever you would call it within an area. Earhart Expressway was thought about back then. There were blueprints on that bein' done. The connection was supposed to be Earhart to the Interstate, so they need this land. And now they're still talkin' about the railroad comin' from Metairie here. It's all in the plan. And we don't know when the plan gonna go through, but it's gonna go through or it planned to go through, but we're gonna fight that.

A lack of political capital, the history of abandonment, and accompanying powerlessness led to deep suspicion of those in positions of power. Outsiders with ideas for neighborhood improvement were met with resistance, even when those ideas involved changes that might lead to a reduction of violence.

One participant in a focus group of community leaders, an African American in her 60s, who purchased a home in the community post-Katrina and was active in neighborhood efforts, expressed personal frustration with this dynamic:

When, post-Katrina, when we sat around downstairs and talked about the history and how many years you've lived here, it was a real sense of I didn't belong here because, for, at the time I didn't even live in Hollygrove. I represented somebody from the outside. I guess more prominent for white folks, but it's not just white folks, it's other people and that represents change and when you talk, when we do, used to do surveys and so forth, people could see no, what's the point? There's no sense of need for growth, there's no urgent feeling for we need to get better, do things differently, things are fine just the way they are.

Despite her fifteen-year involvement in the community, she experienced resistance to her ideas and attributed it to being an outsider. She reflected

upon her experience of the cynicism of the community toward change efforts, noting that residents based their resistance to change on past experiences. Residents focused on defense of their neighborhood were both wary and weary of novelty.

Early in the community's post-Katrina rebuilding, an important turning point occurred. Two organizations active in the early rebuilding efforts were a forty-year-old community organization with deep Hollygrove ties and the newly developed Community Development Corporation. Working jointly, the organizations convened a series of community visioning meetings where returning residents engaged a community planner and architect who assisted these nascent efforts. AARP, seeking a neighborhood in which to test a Livable Communities Model Neighborhood Project, was attracted to their work and began working strategically with the organizations, bringing money, resources, organizational capacity, and helping residents improve their ability to bridge the community to outsiders. Residents adopted tenets of Saville's (2009) SafeGrowth model, which helped neighborhood residents envision, "create and self-regulate their own safety in collaboration with service providers such as planning and police" (390). The model brought members of the NOPD and the City Councilperson to the community for training together with residents.

One resident committee developed during this project focused upon crime prevention and with grant monies secured by AARP hired two crime experts. They mapped significant violent crime hotspots and surveyed residents' perceptions of places deemed most dangerous in the community. The flashpoint for much of the neighbors' concern was also the epicenter for most of the violent crime occurred was a two-block stretch of the neighborhood where most of the drugs were sold and where a significant amount of gun violence erupted, with two ABOs: a corner store and the neighborhood bar named Big Time Tips.

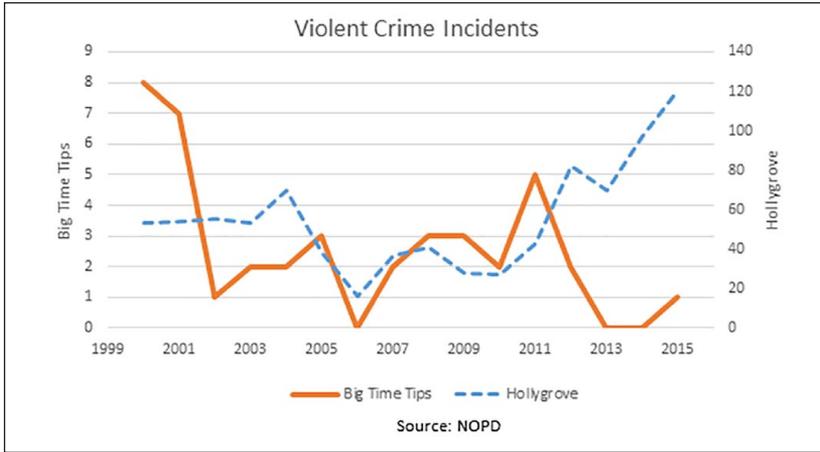
One young adult male noted, "every corner where there's a corner store is nine times out of ten dangerous." Arianne, a younger resident who lived adjacent to this block, described the flow between the two, "Everybody that hung in the store, like on the corner, when the store closed they would go to Big Time Tips." Robert, who lived across from the bar, described the violence there, "People getting shot all under the house next door, I can't count how many people got killed inside that bar." Many considered the violence to be the product of troublemakers from other places, as did Charles who lived nearby, "Tips had a lotta people from outta the neighborhood comin' over there. And the guy runnin' Tips was allowin' anything to happen in there."

Neighbors noted that the manager of Tips was not a local resident and did not seem to be invested in the neighborhood's well-being and safety. While the previous owners of Tips were residents of the neighborhood and were perceived to have run the ABO in a manner beneficial to the community, neighbors considered the new manager problematic because of the violence that occurred there. By contrast, the Morris Lounge, a bar across the street from Tips, was locally owned and was considered to be a safe asset to the community. A resident living in the next block said Morris Lounge "was like Cheers, everybody knew everybody, and Ricky wouldn't put up with crap, as things cranked up, they were gonna have everybody in the bar on their butt . . . he wouldn't let things escalate." The owner was a neighborhood resident who was strongly embedded in neighborhood bonding networks.

A second expert trained residents, alongside the NOPD, in a model of crime prevention known as Second Generation Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (Saville 2009). The model proved beneficial in two ways: first, residents learned to differentiate between law enforcement, the domain of the NOPD, and crime prevention, which ultimately was the responsibility of the neighborhood residents; second, it provided a model within which residents could shape their own goals for crime prevention with the cooperation of the police. A key member of the crime prevention committee was a federal judge who lived in the community and was able to exert influence with the police department, assuring their cooperation and enhancing the community's ability to advance their own crime prevention agenda.

As we have seen, Carr (2003) argued that shutting down trouble spots may be one of the most effective strategies residents can take to reduce violent crime, and this is in fact the strategy Hollygrove residents took. A coordinated effort of community members and the lead organizations resulted in a coordinated effort to report incidences of violence at Big Time Tips via phone and emails. The result was an interdepartmental raid on the bar resulting in its temporary closure. At a subsequent hearing of the New Orleans Alcohol and Tobacco Board, residents testified regarding the violence emanating from the bar and their efforts to curb it. This hearing brought the revocation of the bar's liquor license, which significantly reduced incidences of neighborhood violence at that location. Figure 2 shows the drop in violent crime at Tips' corner, as compared with a rise of crime in the neighborhood as a whole.

Resistance toward outside agents of change appeared to be lessening at that point. The same community leader who earlier bemoaned resistance to change would later reflect on new developments in the neighborhood imported by outsiders:



**Figure 2.** Violent crime incidents in Hollygrove and at the corner where Big Time Tips bar was located.

Many positive things happened. Not everybody in the neighborhood got involved in change, making things better, but I think almost everybody was impacted by the people that were involved. What we did with the AARP and even the Hollygrove Market and all of that, the seniors, all of those things were small and somewhat connected and involved a handful of people, it did not involve the whole neighborhood. But you can't say how directly they were influenced except that it changed the atmosphere in the neighborhood. I think the threat, that fear of outsiders coming in, began to dissipate and the resistance to change lessened, for the first time people said, "Yeah, you know, something could happen."

A police official also noticed the change brought by outsiders:

The farmer's market back there is bringing different people back to the community, people from outside. I've even gone there to get eggs before. It brings outside people into the community. It's a neighborhood that in the 90s anybody would have been scared to go in. And now you have people that are not from Hollygrove and maybe not even from New Orleans, that traditionally would have been scared to come into the city. And the only way they'd even come into New Orleans is if they're drivin' on the Interstate and they just keep goin', now coming to the farmer's market on a regular basis to buy things. I've seen people from all over the city. And I think that's great because it makes the neighborhood almost like a normal neighborhood now. And somebody who would've said before, "I'll never live back there" now maybe even consider movin' back in there.

The neighborhood's improved political and social capital was accompanied by an improved neighborhood reputation. Resistance to outsiders appeared to be diminishing according to Dr. T, who said "as more and more people come in and not only move into the community, embrace the community, and care for the community, change can happen." The collaborative bridging relationships between the neighborhood and outsiders proved beneficial to the community, resulted in less rigid and defended boundaries, increased social capital, and reduced marginalization.

## Conclusion

In a context of political and social abandonment and marginalization, neighborhoods like Hollygrove develop a protective siege mentality fostered by both the strong need for self-preservation and a deep mistrust of outsiders whose motives may be detrimental to their well-being. Residents define outsiders as invaders and enact defenses to protect against their intrusions. Police are seen as foreign occupiers, politicians are thought to be biased against their interests, and even the business community is perceived as profiting at the expense of local residents. The resultant resistance, even against those outsiders who could potentially facilitate change, brings further isolation and marginality.

This marginalization becomes a factor limiting the life chances of residents in two ways. First, as residents defend their community from outside invaders they limit the inflow of much-needed social and political capital that would allow greater access to resources that would serve to reduce violence. Second, rigidly defended boundaries also limit residents to the confines of the neighborhood and thus create conditions under which a subculture of street violence is valorized. Boundary rigidity, therefore, maintains the status quo as resident life chances are limited to resources currently available to the community.

Much of the research on violent crime in lower-income minority neighborhoods stems from the social disorganization framework, largely developed in Northern cities, which is premised on the idea that neighborhood social networks—in-group or bonding networks—are weak. This idea is often linked to Wilson's (1987, 1996) arguments that the departure of black middle classes after desegregation and the loss of industrial jobs left lower-income African American neighborhoods disorganized, or the proposition that the Great Migration helped break up cohesive black communities leaving the South for Northern cities (Stack 1974).

Hollygrove does not entirely fit this model. As we saw, neighborhood social cohesion—in-group or bonding social networks—often remain quite strong in lower-income African American neighborhoods in Southern cities

like New Orleans. Paradoxically, analysts over the last twenty years—again, often in Northern cities—have begun to acknowledge that certain forms of social solidarity are consistent with high levels of violent crime: Anderson (1999) describes different subcultural values; Venkatesh (2006, 2008) discusses gangs and the informal economy; Browning, Feinberg, and Dietz (2004) describe negotiated coexistence; Messner and Rosenfeld (1997) describe community resistance to institutional controls; and Silver and Miller (2006) and Kirk and Papachristos (2011) describe legal cynicism. These observations raise the question of how central neighborhood social cohesion—social disorganization and informal social controls—are to the etiology of neighborhood violence.

What lower-income black neighborhoods in Northern and Southern cities seem to share in common is not necessarily social disorganization but, rather, marginalization and social abandonment. That is, bridging social networks are weak, connecting these neighborhoods to the rest of the city and to the authorities. For this reason, we suggested that the approach described by Carr (2003) may be relevant here: neighborhood residents and their organizations might partner with the authorities to shut down gathering places for violent offenders like troublesome bars.

The key to this strategy is that neighborhood residents and their organizations must be open to partnering with outside actors who are prepared to work in the interests of the community. This is difficult in marginalized neighborhoods where distrust of outsiders is high. Hurricane Katrina may have provided an unanticipated catalyst in Hollygrove. In the years following Katrina, Hollygrove residents appeared to be increasingly comfortable with outsiders. The widespread devastation provided an occasion for the community to rethink previous attitudes toward outsiders. As residents returned to the community in desperate need of help, outsiders were allowed a unique window through which they brought novel ideas for intervention. However, outside ideas alone did not produce collective efficacy. The difference was the collaborative relationship between residents and outsiders, where local visions for a better neighborhood were coupled with resources they could not have secured on their own. The result was an empowered citizenry with enhanced social and political capital.

Hollygrove's residents determined that reducing neighborhood violence cannot be the sole domain of outside agencies. Waiting for others to fix the problem is a condition of advanced marginality and its hopelessness and helplessness. Instead, they were able to move their neighborhood from a position of opposition, cynicism, and marginality toward improved collective efficacy and reduced violence. In particular, building a coalition of residents, nonprofits, and municipal authorities to shut down a hotspot of violence, the

Big Time Tips bar, gave residents the feeling that they could work with outsiders to improve the neighborhood.

Our findings suggest three important theoretical implications. First, our description of boundary rigidity gives further depth to Wilson's (1987) characterization of neighborhood social isolation, combined with Weil et al.'s (2019) finding that violent crime is higher in neighborhoods with high in-group (bonding) social networks and low out-group (bridging) social networks. A disadvantaged, socially isolated neighborhood becomes a defended fortress, but this only exacerbates the problem of violent crime, because neighborhood residents decline to work with outside change agents and authorities who have the resources to help. Selective trust of certain outsiders can help neighborhoods develop partnerships to address these problems.

Second, it is noteworthy that closing down a trouble spot, Big Time Tips, was apparently the most effective action that the emergent partnership of residents, nonprofits, and authorities took. The closure removed a hotspot of trouble, and it also helped build a sense of efficacy among residents, reduce their mistrust of outside change agents, and thus reduce the neighborhood's social isolation. Notably, this is the same strategy described by Carr (2003) in his characterization of the "new parochialism." Rather than relying on informal social controls based on local, or bonding, social networks, residents were able to partner with nonprofits and city authorities to remove a hotspot of crime. In that sense, they strengthened bridging social networks. Moreover, while Carr's example was a middle-class Chicago neighborhood, home to many municipal police officers and firefighters, he argued that this strategy might be usable by lower-income, marginalized neighborhoods as well. The key was that, if local neighborhood networks cannot exert informal social controls by themselves, then this kind of civic/public partnership may provide an effective alternative.

To be sure, this strategy raises potential questions of vigilante justice or unfair treatment of selected businesses or neighborhood residents. Are neighborhood residents taking the law into their own hands or favoring people in their own social networks? We suggested that this was not the case in Hollygrove after Katrina. The partnership of residents, nonprofits, and authorities were enforcing existing ordinances and following due process. Moreover, the problematic business owners and managers were given opportunities to come into compliance, but did not do so. Possibly, they did not change their behavior because, as nonresidents, they were indifferent to the well-being of the neighborhood; however, while this may help explain their inaction, it does not excuse it. Any reform strategy must choose targets for enforcement and try to leverage successes in a multiplying effect. To be justifiable, such a strategy must use legal enforcement, and targets of enforcement must be given an opportunity to come into compliance.

Third, ironically, while most theories of informal social control and collective efficacy assume that neighborhoods that experience high levels of violent crime lack strong internal social networks and social solidarity, as we noted, most such theories were developed with reference to Northern cities like Chicago or Philadelphia. Yet many observers note that in some Southern cities like New Orleans, lower income minority neighborhoods actually possess high levels of internal social solidarity. Growing evidence also suggests that internal, or bonding, ties in marginalized neighborhoods in Northern cities may not be as weak as originally ascribed to them. Our study suggests that internal social solidarity may not universally be the key factor. Rather, as Wilson (1987) and Weil et al. (2019) suggest, it is the presence of strong internal (bonding) social networks combined with weak external (bridging) social networks that may be key. In other words, the core of the problem may be marginalization and social isolation, characterized by rigidly defended neighborhood boundaries and a mistrust of outsiders, even those who could and would help.

Perhaps our most important finding for both theory and policy development is that a successful action by a partnership of residents, nonprofits, and city and law enforcement authorities may lead to the creation of a greater sense of efficacy and a reduced mistrust of helpful outsiders. This, in turn, may help convert a vicious circle into a virtuous circle, as civic action, trust, efficacy, and coalition-building help make neighborhood boundaries more porous, more open to outside resources, and reduce violent crime. However, we would also caution that a reduction of violent crime on one neighborhood corner may or may not contribute to a reduction of violent crime in the neighborhood as a whole, let alone the whole city. As we saw, even as violent crime fell on the corner around the Big Time Tips bar, violent crime rose in Hollygrove as a whole. It remains an open question whether shutting down one hotspot simply displaces crime to a different hotspot, or whether it proves to be the first step in an overall reduction. We cannot answer that question with our focused case study. Still, the immediate neighbors of Big Time Tips were much relieved at their newly peaceful corner.

Another question also remains unanswered. In Hollygrove, the reform partnership was built in the context of recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina. These recovery efforts may have catalyzed the building of this coalition. The question is whether such a coalition can be built in a neighborhood mistrustful of outsiders during more ordinary times. This is likely to remain a challenge.

The role of a neighborhood's boundary conditions has the potential to be a promising direction for future research on neighborhood violence and neighborhood reform. Despite their marginalization, high-violence communities possess a wealth of untapped resources and ideas that are only as

limited as their ability to transcend the defended boundaries that constrain them. New models of cooperative crime prevention and response that ally neighborhood residents with external reform agents could prove to be the key to opening these boundaries and fostering greater collective efficacy, thereby leading to strategies for reducing neighborhood violence.

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